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# PCW TODAY

£ 2.10 Winter 97/98 Issue 8

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PUBLISHED BY  
**STRAD**  
ISSN 1368-4485

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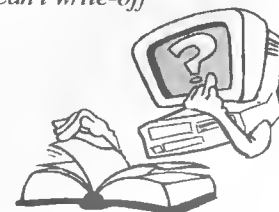
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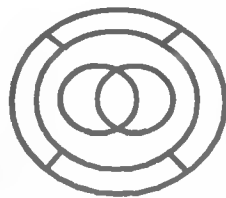
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# This Issue...



**W**elcome to issue eight of PCW Today. Believe it or not, we have now been going for an astonishing two years! Many of our new readers will no doubt be wondering where we've been hiding for all this time!

To celebrate our birthday, the crew at *Today* decided that now was the time to upgrade to a professional editing system. Two weeks before deadline day, everything was transferred from PCWs to PCs. You can guess what happened next! 'The entire system went down and we lost everything!' The layout design and logos in this edition were produced entirely from scratch in a single day! So if you spot any glaring errors - you'll know why - and I can only apologise in advance.

Despite all this, I believe this issue of *Today* is our best to date. I'm very happy to welcome top writers Steve Denson and John Craggs to the team. But best news of all is the arrival of international award-winning writer and former *PCW Plus* stalwart, Mr David Langford himself. David is one of Britain's best writers and we're honoured to welcome him on-board.

Also this issue, we've got a hefty eight extra pages. That takes us up to the size of *Plus* in its last year. And thanks to a welcome recommendation from LocoScript Software in their latest catalogue, our readership is increasing rapidly too.

Things, as they say, is lookin' up!

Yours as ever,

Adrian Braddy,  
Editor.

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## PCW TODAY

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# pcw update

## Amstrad plc rises from the ashes of Betacom

**AFTER** months of turmoil, things seem to be back to normal at the manufacturer of the PCW.

Betacom directors have decided to change the company name back to Amstrad. The decision was made at the Betacom AGM at the end of November 1997.

Alan Sugar, chairman of the electronics giant, believes that Amstrad is the strongest trading name his company owns. Consumers know and trust the name, and retaining it makes economic sense.

The moves are the latest in a saga that has run for several years. In 1996, Alan Sugar attempted to sell Amstrad to Psion in a multi-million pound deal, but talks broke down when the two companies failed to agree on a price. Alan Sugar opted to stay on as boss.



**QUALITY:** The familiar Amstrad logo will be back on electrical products again soon.

Then, on 31st July 1997, Amstrad plc shares ceased to trade on the London Stock Exchange. At that point, Amstrad as a company, effectively ceased to exist. The shares were split between Viglen plc and Betacom plc. Alan Sugar stayed on as chairman of Betacom, hopeful that the company could one day become as big as Amstrad once was.

Now the company name has been changed back to Amstrad, there seems no reason

why Alan Sugar's dream should not continue.

Amstrad's Cliff Lawson was pleased with the news. He said: "We're back for business as usual, as if nothing had ever happened. To infinity and beyond."

Now they have re-appeared on the stock market, Amstrad shares are trading at around 30p. Whilst this figure is nowhere near the heady heights of the 80s, it is reasonable for what is, in effect, a new company.

Amstrad's future looks rosy, as they have won a lucrative contract to produce digital TV set-top boxes for Sky.

Amstrad are also celebrating after recently winning a substantial compensation payout from the US hardware giant - Seagate

## Remaining stocks of the PcW 16 sold to Dixons

**AMSTRAD** have sold the remainder of their stock of PcW 16s to the retail chain Dixons.

The machines will be sold through the high-street outlets of Dixons, Currys and PC World. Argos no longer stock the computer. Each PcW will retail at around £150, although the '16 has been sold for around £129.95 in the winter sales.

Amstrad, who produce the '16, deny that this batch will be the last the world will see of the PCWs. Cliff Lawson from Amstrad told *PCW Today*: "If a product sells well, we will continue producing it. If Dixons ask us for more, we'll probably make them. Our factory can begin production again within a matter of hours"

Whilst Dixons will deal with most of the

customer support, Amstrad say they are still responsible for the machine and continue to update the operating system.

The PcW does seem to be selling well, particularly at its new low price. Amstrad's main rivals in the word processor market all retail at more than twice the price of the '16. Dixons have reported "good" sales over the Christmas period.

# RoutePlanner given mouse control

COMSOFT have included full mouse-control capabilities in a new version of their ground-breaking route planning software.

RoutePlanner originally only worked with the keyboard cursor keys, but the latest version is fully compatible with the most popular PCW mouse, the Keymouse.

The update dramatically improves the performance and speed of RoutePlanner. Anyone who has not got the latest version can get a free upgrade simply by contacting Comsoft.

RoutePlanner has been universally acclaimed by the PCW press and users alike. The package is similar to AutoRoute Express on the PC. It displays a road map of Britain, complete with over 3000 towns and villages. The program allows users to plot the quickest route and gives directions to guide them there.

RoutePlanner costs £24.95 and is available for all PCWs, except the '16, from Comsoft, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW. Tel: 0141 5544735. It can also be bought from SD MicroSystems on 07000 736427.

## PCW company on the move

SD MicroSystems, one of the biggest providers of PCW software have moved to new premises.

Their new details are: Dept PCW, PO Box 99, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1NA. Tel: 07000 736427. Steve Denson, boss at the software house, apologised for the disruption caused. Their Christmas time move turned out to be very stressful. He said: "Although we travelled only a few miles down the road in Norfolk, we had a very traumatic time."

New additions to the SD Micro range include RoutePlanner and a budget 3.5" disc drive priced at under £50. Check out our exclusive review for more details.

## PD Blake goes commercial

WELL-KNOWN public domain provider PD Blake has launched his first range of commercial software.

All-in-One is a major new database and mail-merger available for just £14.95. Doodlebug is a graphics package that runs from Basic and is particularly good for designing borders. It costs £9.50.

Also launched is a graphics disc of giant letters for LocoScript and a novelty disc of screen savers for LocoScript and CP/M. Both of these packages cost £7.50. All PD Blake software comes on 3.5" disc only. Contact 01482 864230 for more details.

## CP/M Maxam released again - as shareware

ROBOT Software have announced that CP/M Maxam is to be released as shareware.

The program was originally sold for £25, but a registered copy can now be purchased for just £5. The price includes a manual disc and full user support.

Brian Watson of Robot Software said: "The CP/M version of Maxam is the fullest and most comprehensively implemented assembler and code development system for Amstrad PCWs."

He added: "This major release marks a radical change in the way software for Amstrad computers is supplied."

For your copy, send a cheque payable to: BA Watson to the following address: Robot Software, Harrowden, 39 High Sreet, Sutton-in-the-Isle, Ely CB6 2RA. Tel: 01353 777 006

The copyright on the software is still held by WACCO, but they have no objection to the software being copied or distributed by public domain providers.

## More new features in latest version of LocoScript 4

LOCOSCRIPT Software have released a third major version of LocoScript 4, with many more new features.

The latest version - 4.10/4.11 as we go to press - will cost current users a five pound upgrade fee. New buyers will get the latest version automatically at the regular price of just £39.95

The majority of the new features are in graphics manipulation. It is now possible to draw boxes, change the size and position of graphics once they have been positioned and produce a mirror image of a graphic.

For further details, contact LocoScript at: 10 Vincent Works, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3HJ. Tel: 01306 747757.

## No more software for the PcW 16?

THE LATEST bad news for PcW 16 users is that new software is unlikely to materialise.

Plans for Basic, chess, graphics and communications software were underway, but a source told *PCW Today* that it was unlikely that any of these packages will ever be completed. To date only two PcW 16 programs have surfaced.

# Creative Thinking

*Nik Holmes of Creative Technology talks exclusively to PCW Today*

**C**REATIVE Technology are generally classed as being one of the top PCW companies. They were the developers of some of the finest PCW software around, including the famous MicroDesign.

More recently, Creative were heavily involved in the production of the PcW 16 and they produced a '16 magazine, with the promise of new software. So what's happening now at Creative Technology? *PCW Today* spoke to Creative's Nik Holmes to find out..

**PT:** Will there be any more editions of the *PcW 16* magazine?

**NH:** We will do another issue of the '16 magazine, hopefully pretty soon, but there's little indication that anyone's doing any significant ongoing development, so the next issue may be the last. We will certainly have to do future issues on a SAE basis, as it's costing us far more to mail people than they are spending on the software

**PT:** What about the promised '16 software - the comms package and chess?

**NH:** Although I've seen early functional versions of these programs, all work on them stopped last Spring, and my current understanding is that the authors do not plan to restart. There are also a couple of people working on BASIC interpreters of one sort or another, but I don't hold out any great hopes for these either.

**PT:** Are you still supporting the older PCWs?

**NH:** We still do an extensive amount of PCW support - far more than sales justify - because of the nature of the user base. We continue to ship the full MD3 product range, and have no plans to stop doing so. The end for each individual product will probably come when we run out of key components, or they become unavailable - which shouldn't be for a while yet. For example, we redesigned the KeyMouse interface only last October, to stop the production cost going up so that we could maintain the old price.

**PT:** Do you still develop your own original software?

**NH:** No, we have pretty much stopped being an independent software publisher, and rely on contract, consultancy and training work to pay the rent. We support the PCW for old times sake, because people bought our products in the past - not because we're making anything out of it now.

If you want numbers to illustrate this, you might contemplate the fact that despite your and our best efforts, we did not sell a single retail copy of MD3 in October or November last year.

The shift in our business means that we can no longer afford to employ office staff on a full-time basis, and occasionally have an answering machine on the main phone line - but we do return calls and answer support queries as we always did. The only exception to this is the '16 users who call for support on the supplied software - as this is not our product, we point these enquiries to the "official" support line operated by Locoscript. But we do of course support those '16 programs we have supplied ourselves.

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***"We support the  
PCW for old  
times sake"***

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On a broader front, we still have the odd good product idea, but nothing has really stuck for a while. Also, new product efforts are not generally going to be directed at the PCW market, old or new, because this market simply doesn't spend enough money to make an idea into a product.

People who have bought our products have our phone number, and PCW sales are still important to us, even though they are an ever-shrinking component of our revenue.

**PT:** Do you regret not making the '16 more like the older PCWs?

**NH:** It's not a matter for regret, because all design decisions about the '16 were taken by the company which designed and manufactured it - Amstrad. We were merely one of four different sub-contracting companies who contributed to the software development under Amstrad's management. We probably contributed more design ideas than the other contractors, and were involved at an earlier stage, but the '16 is an Amstrad product, not a CT one.

**PT:** So don't you believe simply updating CP/M for the new computer would have been better than writing a new OS?

**NH:** I don't really know what you mean by "updating CP/M" - the reason for designing the '16 in the first place was that Amstrad had demand for the PCW, but couldn't make them because they couldn't buy 1985 components in 1993. They had to redesign the PCW with different hardware - which would have needed a complete new Operating System writing - even if that OS was a CP/M emulator.

Since the job of an operating system is chiefly the communication with a BIOS and hardware system which had to be brand new, it wouldn't have saved any work to make the OS a CP/M version or not. Also, the need to read DOS discs was considered to be pretty essential. This would have been tricky on a CP/M clone.

**PT:** But established PCWers wanted to see a computer compatible with their old PCW - not an entirely new platform.

**NH:** Admittedly, the philosophy behind the PcW 16 bombed, with users of the old PCW but has been well-received (especially at the new low prices) by those who never had an old PCW, so never got confused between the very fundamental differences in the product-design philosophy between the two machines.

*Creative Technology can be contacted at:  
10 Park Street, Uttoxeter, Staffs ST14 7AG.  
Tel: 01889 567160.*



Signature:\_\_\_\_\_

# The truth behind the PcW 16

*Amstrad's Cliff Lawson exclusively reveals all for PCW Today*

**T**HE AUTUMN issue of *PCW Today* asked a number of questions about the PcW 16 that deserve answers.

**"Where is all the promised '16 software?"**

For a company to develop software they have to weigh up the potential target market and decide if it would be profitable to go ahead and put the effort in.

Generally a company might expect to pay about £30,000 to £50,000 to employ a software engineer for a year and a typical program might involve 2 or 3 man years of software programming effort. So it's going to cost £60,000 to £150,000 to develop a half decent program.

Now supposing you thought you may only sell 1,000 copies that means the amortisation of the development cost is going to be £60 to £150 per copy sold which just isn't commercially viable (and that's before you've included costs for physical goods, marketing etc.).

On the other hand, if you thought you could sell 10,000 copies, the development amortisation would drop to £6 to £15 which is far more acceptable.

So then as a developer you have a big decision to make, do you put your effort into a program for the PcW16 where there's maybe only a few ten's of thousands of machines in the whole world of which only 10% (1-2,000 people say) are going to be interested in buying your program (10% if you are VERY lucky). Or, do you spend the same time and money writing Windows 32 software for the 50,000,000 PC's in the world where even if only 0.02% of the users buy your program you sell 50,000 copies which allows you to amortise the development cost at about £1-£3 per unit and still make tens of thousands of pounds of profit? It seems an easy choice to me!

**"Why did Amstrad bother writing a new Operating System?"**

You actually included the answer in your own reply and that was that magic word "WYSIWYG". It's what naive(sic) computer users want and expect these days - bit like the difference between DOS and Windows.

Okay, so we could have asked Locomotive to write a WYSIWYG version of LocoScript for hardware very similar to the old PCW (but with souped up processor) and, in actual fact, that's exactly what we did but they estimated that it would take just as long as to write something from scratch so that's what we ended up doing as it's much easier to write software starting with a "clean sheet of paper". It was Locomotive who suggested we talk to Creative who had the experience in writing graphics systems (MicroDesign) for the original PCW.

The design of the OS and hardware were very much dictated by Simon Hargreaves, Creative's outstanding software development engineer. The hardware was designed to make the OS easy to implement and the OS includes all the very best bits of everything Simon had previously done in MD and then some. It's actually a bit of a shame that the economics of the situation don't encourage more people to develop software as it's a brilliantly thought out OS with a rich set of features (that lovely Microsoft phrase!).

## It's a brilliantly thought-out OS with a rich set of features

What you have to try and appreciate is that the readers of *PCW Today* are a minority (though quite vocal!) who are "technical" users of the PCW.

The fact is that 98% of people who bought all the original PCWs weren't computer enthusiasts, they were just people at home and in small offices who wanted a machine to do word processing and it didn't matter a fig to them whether it ran on steam or rubber bands.

It was only that 2% that used it for other (CP/M based) computing tasks besides the word processing and the vast majority probably wouldn't even know what CP/M was (except that maybe it was "that thing you start when you want to run "diskit"

before the days when Locoscript included those functions anyway").

As such the PcW 16 is designed to appeal to the complete computer novice with the sole intention of word processing (perhaps with a minimal amount of spreadsheet/address book work thrown in). In this day and age I think we all agree that the only sensible solution for people who want to run a broad range of computing tasks is an Intel based computer running Windows.

The PcW16 is not trying to compete with a PC as a general office computer. How could a 16MHz 8-bit Z80 ever hope to compete with a 266MHz Pentium II? No, the PcW16 is aimed very distinctly at the person who just wants to do word processing and does not claim to be anything more than that. I happen to think it fits that bill quite nicely and the user friendly, mouse/windows interface together with WYSIWYG is what even computer novices expect from a computer these days. There is still a market for a cheap (£200) alternative to a PC (£800) for people who want to word process but they shouldn't kid themselves into thinking that they can run British Telecom's accounts department on it!!

You may have noticed that the original PCW is always written as PCW where the letters mean Personal Computer Wordprocessor because in it's day (10 years ago!) it was a viable Computer as well as a Wordprocessor. For the 16 we always use PcW16, de-emphasising the C (Computer) aspect of it because we recognise that it is NOT a viable alternative to a real computer these days, but it is good at doing what it was designed for - the PW bit!

Let's face it, there are more than a million original PCWs out there and perhaps as many as 100,000 are still being used.

That's quite a potential market but how many pieces of software have been released for those models in the last 2-3 years? Not many as again developers for that see the bright lights of the Windows world and are off like a flash.

*Cliff Lawson works in product development at Amstrad plc and was an important member of the team that brought us the PcW 16.*



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# PCW Club Scene



## **Berkshire PCW Users Group**

This lively group is run by Ed Harris, who also edits the regular newsletter - PCW Link. The latest edition is less substantial than usual, filled mostly with adverts. The group welcome postal members. If you'd like more information, contact Ed at 121 Bullbrook Drive, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2QR. Tel: 01344 428938.

## **Birmingham and West Midlands PCW Club**

England's second city is home to one of the biggest PCW clubs around, attendances of 70 or more are not unheard of. There are monthly meetings, each with talks and software demonstrations. To find out more, get in touch with John Bell on: 0121 4343078

## **Capital Computer Club**

This club, based in New Zealand, could be home to some of the most southerly based PCWers. We've just received correspondence from Acting Secretary - KJ Orams. For further information, write to: 13 Eagle Street, Karori, Wellington 6005, New Zealand.

## **Cornwall PCW Club**

The January/February issue of the clubs newsletter has just arrived and makes interesting reading. There's an excellent double-page spread on the history of the PCW. Future meetings planned include a look at Basic on Saturday March 14, and on Saturday April 11, the group will be investigating graphics. For more details, contact chairman, John Walker on 01752 706266.

## **Crawley PCW Club**

The February issue of the ever dependable Crawley newsletter is as usual, a good read. Included, this month, is a review of Route Planner, the latest big PCW software release. There's also a feature that claims 4.6% of genealogists use a PCW! Contact John Fisher on: 01732 863062.

## **Devon PCW Club**

Judging by our subscribers, the PCW is very big on the south coast. The Devon group run a regular newsletter and keep a large library of PCW related books and software. For more information, get in touch with Edward Pooley, Kew Cottage, Birch Lane, Rounswell, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 3RQ. Tel: 01271 327056.

## **Hastings & Eastbourne PCW Club**

This group runs a regular newsletter and holds monthly talks and demonstrations. Meetings are held in the Bell Room at St Peter's Community Centre in Bexhill. To find out more about this highly active group, contact George Magee on: 01323 833969.

## **Heads of the Valleys Group**

This Welsh group still continues to operate and the few remaining members still meet occasionally. Contact: Anthony Hill on 01222 618012.

## **Hereford Computer Club**

I'm informed by a member of this group that none of the other members had ever even heard of *PCW Today*. Shame on you all! It costs £15 to join up and that includes subscription to the club magazine - Keyboard. Meetings are held from 7pm on the first Wednesday of each month at The Cellar, 41 Widemarsh Street, Hereford.

## **Javea Computer Club**

Regular meetings are held at Pedro's Restaurant, Javea in Alicante. PCW users are welcome. Contact Tom Hughes on: 96 5583508.

## **Joyce Computer Club**

The PCWs are known as Joyces in Holland and this group proves that they are just as popular as in Britain. Contact: Frank Van Empel, Leksmondhof 8, NL-1108 EM Amsterdam. The club are one of few to maintain a web-site.

## **Kentish PCW Club**

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month at the Chapel Hall in Bush Road, Cuxton. Postal members are welcome. For further details, contact: Leslie Merchant, 14 Mill Road, Northfleet, Gravesend. Tel: 01474 335882.

## **Leeds Amstrad PCW Club**

The group holds monthly 'hands-on' meetings with demonstrations of PCW hardware and software. For more information on the Yorkshire club, contact Paul Newmark, 18 Claythorpe Road, Leeds LS16 5HW. Tel: 0113 2755576.

## **MicroDesign International User Group**

Membership to this large club costs £8 and includes subscription to the excellent magazine - The Design Tree which comes out twice a year and covers all PCW matters, not only desktop publishing. Members also have free access to more than 6000 public domain discs. Many of them are fonts and graphics for MicroDesign. Contact: Doug Cox, 132 Adelaide Grove, East Cowes, Isle of Wight PO32 6DF. 01983 296366.

## **Morley Amstrad PCWers**

This club meets in Morely Public Library at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of every month. Membership costs just £10. The group has a library of PCW software and a regular newsletter. The club is now open to PC users too. Contact: Frank King on 01924 430319 for further information.

## **National Amstrad PCW Teachers Club Helpline**

Teachers wanting advice on PCW matters should contact Richard Harper, 25 Pyecroft Road, Great Snakey, Warrington WA5 3NF. Or give him a bell in sociable hours on 01925 723898.

## **PCW Australia Group**

For details, contact: Sid O'Brien, PO Box 434, Fairfield, New South Wales. Tel: 02 7571105.



### Perthshire PCW Club

For more information on this Scottish PCW group, contact David Paterson, 26 Moulin Crescent, Perth PH1 2EA. Tel: 01738 621346.

### RADSTOCK.pcw

This relatively new arrival on the PCW club scene meets on the second Friday of each month at the Radstock Methodist Church from 7.30pm. For more information, contact Adrian Hooper, 40 Kilmersdon Road, Haydon, Radstock, Avon BA3 3QN. Tel: 01761 436276.

### SCOTWEST.pcw

There was no January issue of the club newsletter - CHR\$7 - but the February edition appeared on time. There's the usual round-up of the nation's clubs and a selection of small-ads. Also included are a few articles of general interest to PCWers. The next meeting is on Saturday 14 February, when RoutelPlanner will be on hand for members to have a play. Contact: David Williams, 32/34 Carfin Street, New Stevenson, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403.

### SIG - Amstrad PCW (USA)

We hope to have full details of this American Mensa Special Interest Group in the next issue. The group produce a regular magazine, which is very distinctive. It's like one long letters page!

### Somerset PCW Club

The group are bothered by falling membership, so have decided to allow PC users into the group. They also produce a quarterly newsletter. For details, contact: Elsa Turner on 01935 823618.

### South Essex PCW Club

The club has been subject to major turmoil since Christmas. Regular magazine editor, Steve Massam has been forced to temporarily stand down due to work commitments. Chairman, Mike Elliston, has stepped into the breach. Membership now stands at a healthy 200. The latest edition of The Disc Drive is the best yet, with a full-colour front cover. Amongst the many excellent features are guides to MicroDesign and LocoScript. For more details contact: David Lalieu, 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley, Essex SS7 1RD. Tel: 01702 551618.

### Teesside PCW Users Group

The North East's only PCW club has been granted a temporary reprieve from closure. If membership has doubled to 24 by the time the Extraordinary General Meeting takes place on Monday March 16, then the group will stay. There is now no joining fee and the annual membership charge has been waived. Members simply pay £1 per meeting. For further details, contact Gladys Baker, 8 Knayton Grove, Stockton on Tees TS19 7RW. Tel: 01642 580018.

### Thornton PCW Club

Meetings are held on every second Tuesday at the Cleveleys Community Centre, Blackpool. New members are very welcome to the group, formerly known as the Wyred Computer Club. For more information, contact Steve at 5 Carlsile Grove, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 4BY.

### U3A PCW Discussion Group (Spain)

Ken Tether has set up a PCW discussion group under the umbrella of the University of the Third Age. It initially consists of eight members. Meetings are fortnightly at Marbella 2000 Community Centre on a Monday. Ken welcomes any *PCW Today* reader visiting the area to pop in to one of the meetings. Apparently there are over 200 PCWs on the Costa Del Sol, mostly 9512s. Contact Ken on: 34 5 283 2096.

### Widmore PCW Club

This Bromley based group is still going strong. There are currently 40 members who meet on the third Wednesday of the month at Bromley Adult Education College. The group have access to nearly 30 PCWs, including a PcW 16. For more details, contact Dorothy Featherstone on 01689 858105.

### 8 Bit Magazine

Contact: Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, Ely CB6 2RA. Tel: 01353 777006.

## COVER DISCS

*PCW Today* is pleased to announce that, from the Spring issue, we will be offering cover-discs to readers - becoming the first PCW magazine ever to do so on a regular basis! For now, the discs will only be available in 3.5" CP/M format. However, if there is enough demand we may introduce 3" and PcW 16 formats in the future.

The cover-discs will provide a selection of the best public domain and shareware software we can find, as well as plenty of new fonts and graphics for MicroDesign and LocoScript.

It is also hoped to include demo-versions of commercial PCW software.

To cover the costs, we are charging a nominal £5.00 annual fee. For this, you will get a brand-new 3.5" disc, packed with goodies, with every edition of *PCW Today*.

To order your 3.5" cover discs, simply send a cheque or postal order to:

PCW Today 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL,  
marking the envelope: "Cover discs"



# Driving Force

*Adrian Braddy takes an exclusive peep at the new 3.5" disc drive from SD MicroSystems*

**A**N EARLY morning knock at the door is a welcome sound - it usually signals the arrival of a parcel - and who doesn't enjoy opening parcels? This one was a package from SD MicroSystems. They'd sent their latest new product, mysteriously named "The Black Box".

It turned out to be a neat-looking external 3.5" disc drive for reviewing. I was like a child with a new toy!

The generous folks at SD Micro had loaned me the drive for a period of "long-term" testing. They obviously had a lot of confidence in their product and you could see why. The sleek, black Citizen brand disc drive certainly looked promising.

Almost immediately, I set about installing the drive. Just "plug-in-and-go" the publicity material boasted - well, that's not entirely true. You do have to open up the PCW first.

Now, before you cover your face in your hands in terror at the thought of opening up your beloved PCW, it's nowhere near as bad as it sounds. All you have to do is take out a few screws, lift off the back, plug the drive in and put the back on again. There's no soldering, no hammering and definitely no complicated electrical work.

In fact it's so easy, that the instructions come on a single sheet of paper - and they're comprehensive too.

Once I'd taken the back off the 8256 - the machine I was testing the drive on - it was immediately clear where the disc-drive cable had to go. You'll spot it straight away. The connector is hanging loose on a cable that runs from the 3" A: drive. It's simply a matter of plugging it in.

Depending on the age of your machine, the plug may not quite fit. There's no need to panic - you simply have to cut a couple of slivers of plastic from the connector. This is merely cosmetic and will not harm your computer. I used a pair of scissors, hardly the most precise tool in the world, but they worked fine.

Make sure that the plug goes in as far as it will, to be certain of a connection. Then pass the cable through the hole where the PCW's printer cable goes. You will find that when you put the case back together, the cable fits perfectly beside the printer connection. The two share the port quite happily.

Your new disc drive should now be correctly connected and ready for action, so all that remains now is for you to put the back of the PCW on again. Ensure that you screw everything up tightly, with the correct screws in the correct holes. With the PCW looking like its old self again, put it back on its usual perch.

The Black Box comes with little rubber feet, so it is perfectly safe to stand it on your desktop, or even on top of your PCW, although that is probably not the best of ideas.

I plonked mine on the desk, next to the keyboard and switched the PCW on. I booted up CP/M from the 3" drive and joy of joys, the message at the top of the screen indicated that I had two drives. The new one had been recognised first time.

This particular disc drive is not bootable. In other words, you can't load LocoScript or CP/M from it, but you can copy files to and from 3" discs. Simply use it as you would a standard B: drive.

The Black Box is suitable for the PCW 8256 and the 8512. I understand that it will also work with the 8512, but connecting it is quite a lot more fiddly as the 8512 already has a B: drive.

A peculiarity of the drive is that there must be a disc in it before you switch on, or else the PCW doggedly refuses to recognise it. Any old disc seems to do the trick, it's just a case of remembering, because if you forget you'll have to reboot I've done that a couple of times and it's a nuisance.

Despite this little eccentricity, The Black Box is a fantastic product. And with a price tag of less than £50, it is surely the

cheapest PCW disc drive on the market

So why do you need a new disc drive - why splash out on something you've already got? If you're still using a 3" machine, you should already know the answer.

When the PCW was first created, no-one had a clue which disc format would become the industry standard. Amstrad stuck with the 3" because the discs were of a superior quality. In the end, they were proved wrong and sadly the 3" drive died off and now they are no longer even produced any. This leaves PCW users in something of a predicament. New, good quality 3" discs are very hard to come by. An Italian firm continues to make them but they are far from reliable.

In contrast, the 3.5" discs that the newer PCWs use are readily and cheaply available. And you can rely on them.

So if you're still using an older PCW, there's no need to upgrade your whole system just yet. Adding a 3.5" drive will extend your PCW's life by a good few years.

A 3.5" drive will also give you compatibility. You'll be able to communicate directly with your friend's PCWs and even PCs, if you get the right software.

And of course, some software is no longer available on the old disc format. Companies can no longer afford to support it. Whilst a new B: drive might not be bootable, many programs can be copied from 3.5" to 3" and some will even run from a B: drive.

If you do decide to go for a new 3.5" B: drive, I can heartily recommend The Black Box. We've had it in constant use in the office for around three months now and we've never had any problems with it.

The Black Box costs £49.95 plus £5.00 p&p. It's available from SD MicroSystems, Dept PCW, PO Box 99, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1NA. Tel/Fax: 07000 736427.

# Everything you'll ever need

*PD Blake does it again with another couple of new programs*

**A**NOTHER issue, another batch of PD Blake software to review. If Bill Gates was to take lessons at the Blake school of software programming, Windows 98 would have been ready back in '95!

The man just keeps coming up with quality goods time and time again. Now he's has finally decided to go commercial and has launched a whole sack-load of goodies onto an unsuspecting market.

Along with some great new screen savers, graphics and fonts, PD Blake has been busy with a new graphics package and yet another database - once again far better than the last one.

All In One is a fully menu-driven program that combines the best bits of PD Blake's previous creations with a simple text editor and mail merge.

Like his public domain databases, All In One is powered by Basic, yet it runs as fast as anything written in more advanced programming languages. Once you have copied Basic onto the disc, it is self booting. Put the disc into the drive and you are welcomed by a stunning opening page. Press a key and you reach the main menu.

From here, you can enter the address book, or create your own personalised database. You can enter a simple word-editor, print labels or mail merge letters. The whole set-up is very slick - so different to many PD programs.

Included is a printer control menu, where you can change the font, or alter the size of the paper you are using.

This package is not truly a new one. It is the result of a couple of years continuous development that has seen a number of public domain databases launched under different names. The last was Master Base and All In One is ten times better than that.

If you're looking for a cheap and simple database package that will quickly print addresses and letters then this is the one for you. Competitively priced at £14.95, there is no competition in the budget price range.

Sadly, like all of PD Blake's software, All In One is only available on 3.5" disc.

The second of PD Blake's new commercial programs is curiously titled Doodlebug. This highly versatile package will let you draw simple pictures, create presentation displays, or design borders. Of these three,

the latter is perhaps the most impressive.

Doodlebug has literally hundreds of great shades available - the standard set alone has 70 shades. And you can use these to easily create eye-catching posters flyers, or adverts. With each set of shades comes a different font. These include Serif, LCD and Rounded or you could even create your own.

There is even the possibility of simple animation, and you can create a rolling slideshow to show-off your designs.

Obviously there are limitations - Doodlebug runs from Basic, so it is slow. You can't see the cursor on the screen, so you do feel a little in the dark at times. However, you can see all the graphics on screen, and this immediately sets Doodlebug apart from many of its rivals.

I really do like Doodlebug, it is a lot of fun and at the ultra-low price of £9.50, you can't go far wrong. This is probably my favourite of the entire PD Blake software range - if only because it is so different.

All PD Blake software is available from 99 Normandy Avenue, Beverly, E. Yorks HU17 8PR. Tel: 01482 864230 (7pm-9pm).

## Not so Basic after all!

*We find out why RP Hill's superb new package is causing so much fuss*

**B**ASIC 98 is such an amazing product, no review could ever do it justice, so I won't even begin to try.

I'm getting used to hearing rave-reports of Basic 98 from enthusiastic PCW programmers who say that it is the best thing ever to hit their screens.

This feature-laden program takes up an amazing four 3" discs if you're using an 8256 or 8512. Thankfully, it only takes up two if you use one of the other machines.

Basic 98 will compile programs, written with Mallard Basic, so that they run faster

and with the .COM extension.

It is also a complete Z80 assembler, so that you can access code from the runtime library (which is now included in the price) and easily convert your programs into machine code, for incredibly fast programs.

And that's not all. Basic 98 adds almost 200 new commands to Basic, far to many to list here. They include indexed filing, turtle graphics, system day/date/time, high precision maths. The list goes on and on.

As well as being three programs in one, Basic 98 is about as easy as it could be to

use. There's a LocoScript-style editor for entering your programming, that can create and read up to 100 64k files at a time.

This has been used to create a 500+k manual that handily appears in a window at the bottom of your screen whenever you need it. This is automatically opened when a fault in the program occurs - and it actually tries to explain the problem.

If you are a serious PCW programmer, you would be mad not to buy Basic 98!

Basic 98 costs £25 from RP Hill, 84 Wincheap, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3RS

# Glorious Technicolor™

*Bill Heilbronn puts the colour into LocoScript graphics*

**LOCOSCRIPT 4 saw the dawn of a new era in PCW word processing. For the first time it had become possible to include graphics and colour in a LocoScript document.**

Sadly, LocoScript declared that it was not possible to print graphics in more than one colour. They should have known better. Have you ever heard of a PCW user giving up on a problem?

In fact, LocoScript 4 is perfectly suited to producing multiple colour pictures, without the need for time-consuming and tricky multiple passes through your printer.

So long as you have a colour printer, MicroDesign 3 and the latest version of LocoScript, multi-colour graphics can be produced very quickly.

Boot-up MicroDesign and load the graphic that you wish to use. Save this graphic on a blank disc as ORIGINAL.MDA, this will be reloaded for each colour required.

You must now prepare a new MDA file for each of the colours. There are as many as seven colours available, but a simpler design looks better. In our example we will use red, blue and green.

First up, erase all parts of the picture that are not red, then use FLOOD to fill the red bits with either a shade or a solid. Remember that all these parts will print out in red. Save this file as REDBIT.MDA.

Reload ORIGINAL.MDA then repeat the process for blue and then green, saving them as BLUEBIT.MDA and GREENBIT.MDA respectively. These must each be in an identically sized saving box and centred on the same point, to ensure correct registration on print out.

In the case of a picture built up by combining illustrations, where each component is to be in a different colour, the EXOR technique may be used as an alternative to the above.

For more information on separating colours in MicroDesign, read the tutorial on page 18 of the Autumn 1997 edition of *PCW Today*.

Once you have every colour saved, exit from MicroDesign and load up LocoScript 4. In LocoScript, create a fresh document. Press [+] then type [C][O], then enter RED in the menu box.

Hit [F2] and move the cursor to *New Picture* and press [ENTER]. Move the cursor to highlight the file REDBIT.MDA and press [ENTER] again to confirm it.

Decide on the position you wish the graphic to appear, in relation to the top left corner of the sheet of paper. In the menu box, cursor to *Fixed Position* and press the [+] key to set it. Move to *Horizontal Position* and enter the desired 1/10ths of an inch, hitting [ENTER] when satisfied. Cursor down to the *Vertical Position* and enter the desired 1/6ths of an inch and again tap [ENTER]. Adjust the scaling if necessary and press [ENTER][RETURN]

Make sure to take a note of all the parameters, then repeat the process for each of the colours - in our example - BLUEBIT.MDA and GREENBIT.MDA. Take care to enter identical information for the horizontal and vertical positions, and the scaling factors of each image.

The file should show:

```
(Colour:Red)(Picture)
(Colour:Blue)(Picture)
(Colour:Green)(Picture)
```

If you have followed all the steps carefully and correctly, your printout should be in perfect technicolor™!

With the advent of a further release of LocoScript 4, there may be occasions when an attractive multiple colour image can be made by using the following technique, which requires only one MDA file: (*You will need at least version 4.10/4.11 to carry out this procedure*)

For this, you will need a graphic that has certain areas filled with *solid colour*, not under any circumstances *shade*. In the example we will use the colours red and green, but you can choose the colours that best suit your picture.

Create a new document, press [+] then [C], [O] and type in the menu box - RED.

Press [F2] and move the cursor to *New Picture* and press [ENTER]. Move the cursor to the picture that you want to use and tap [ENTER].

Once again, decide the position and size of your picture, making sure to note down the variables that you pick. Hit [ENTER] and confirm with [RETURN].

In the second line of your document, press [+] then [C], [O] again, only this time type GREEN in the menu box and press [ENTER]. Back in the editing screen, Copy and Paste (picture) from the first line into the second line.

Cursor over the second (picture) and tap [F2]. Move the cursor to *Change Picture Box* and hit [ENTER]. In the menu box, highlight *Inverse Picture* and tick then press [ENTER] again to confirm it.

This process will print an inverted copy of the picture in one colour, over the normal picture in another. It is a simple, yet effective way of getting impressive multi-colour results

It should also be noted that in v4.10/4.11 of LocoScript 4, very attractive text layouts may be achieved by having the facility for *Box* with *Shade* ticked in the menu. the screen might show, for example:

```
(Colour:Green)(Box)(Colour:Red) a block
of text.
```

The new LocoScript 4 features are very exciting and the only way to fully appreciate their value is to experiment.

Have fun.





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**South Essex PCW Club.**  
"Four Winds", 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley, Essex  
SS7 1RD. Tele: (01702) 551618.

# Something for nothing

*Kathleen Thorpe once more enters the world of Public Domain software*

**W**HETHER we like it or not, everyone has to do calculations at some time or another, it's part of life.

A spreadsheet is a program that will do in minutes, what a calculator would take hours to complete. It puts figures in a table and works out all the sums at once.

There are some great spreadsheets around for the PCW, like LocoScript's Rocket, but they can be a bit expensive and you may be paying for features you don't need.

In the public domain, there are a number of spreadsheets that will do everything you want, and you'll only have to pay the handling fee of between just £1.50 and £5.00.

One such spreadsheet is DCALC, written by David Harvey for the PCW.

Its features include a workspace of 60 rows and 26 columns, and menu-driven command entry.

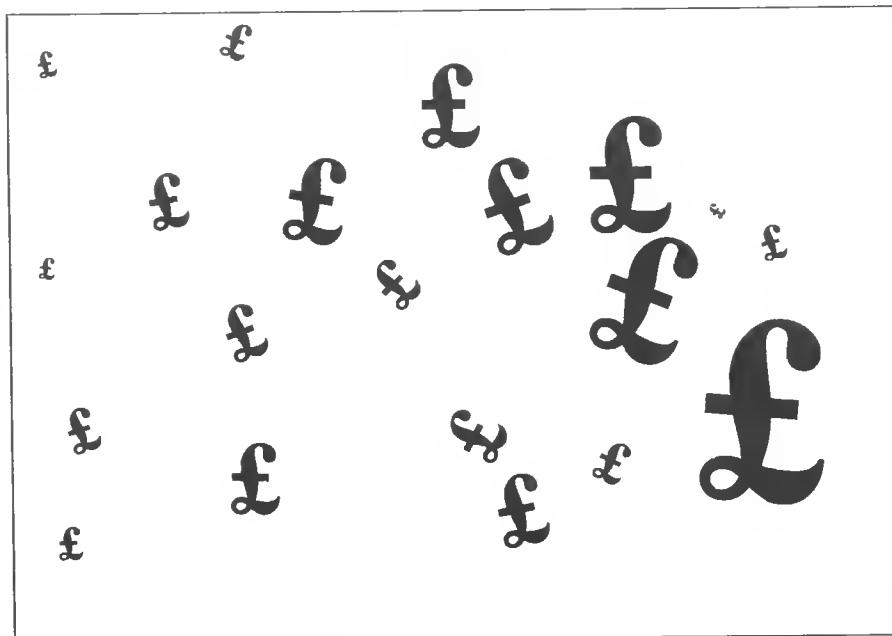
Spreadsheets may be printed direct, or saved as ASCII for incorporation into other documents. This feature is useful in the production of reports.

To run DCALC, first load CP/M from the PCW system disc. Then place the disc containing DCALC.COM in the appropriate drive. At the A> prompt, type DCALC, then hit the [RETURN] key.

The DCALC screen is divided into a number of areas: The position bars identify column/row values, spreadsheet data is displayed in the workspace, status messages and menu lists appear in the message/menu area, and the input area is where you enter your data.

Movement within the workspace is made with the cursor keys. The current cell and anything it contains are highlighted on the screen, and a message is displayed identifying the column/row of the cell. For example:

```
B13 Text [Hello ]
F2 Value [ 11.8]
Z23 Expression [E4:E12*0.15]
G12 Empty
```



■ **MONEY:** A spreadsheet will look after your finances for you

The PCW screen is large enough to view only a portion of the entire workspace at a time. As you move out of the current screen, the 'window' on the workspace moves to keep the cursor/current cell in view.

To execute a DCALC command, first press the [/] key. This presents the first level menu.

To select a command, type the first letter of the command name, or hit the [EXIT] key to return without selecting a command. Selecting the *File* option activates a further menu asking if you want to Save, Load, Print or Clear.

To enter data into a sheet is quite simple. Select Text/Number/Expression as required and enter the appropriate data in the input area. the [EXIT] key abandons the command, otherwise hit the [RETURN] key to enter the data into the current cell.

This information can be cleared simply by selecting delete. And, if you wish, you can clear the whole workspace too. Just press [F] for File and then choose Clear. You will be prompted to confirm the action - if you reply with [Y], the workspace will be wiped clean.

To save or load a spreadsheet, select File, then choose to either Save or Load. Enter a name of up to eight characters, without an extension - DCALC automatically appends the extension .DCL to any spreadsheet file it reads.

Choosing Calculate will evaluate the entered expressions or calculations according to the values already present. With more data added, the result of these calculations could be incorrect as they are not updated automatically, except when a spreadsheet is loaded and just before it is printed. The Calculate command brings all calculations up to date.

Like most public domain programs, DCALC comes with an excellent on-disc manual which goes into great detail on how to use the program, with examples.

If you're looking for a simple, budget spreadsheet, DCALC's the one for you.

**DCALC is available from PD Blake, 99 Normandy Avenue, Beverley, E.Yorks HU17 8PR. Send a 3.5" disc together with £1.50 and an SAE.**

**AMSTRAD PCW  
SECTION**

If you are still using your PCW then we are still very involved and providing as full a service as we can, Repairs, Spares Consumables are all available.

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# Help File

*Send your tips and questions to Help File,  
PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough,  
Teesside TS5 5EL*

## Recovering lost files

**HAVE** you ever deleted files and then regretted it later? Or even accidentally wiped a disc that had an important file on it? Well there is a way to bring it back.

With a spot of dabbling in CP/M, you can recover lost files. If it is a LocoScript file, remember all deleted files go into limbo first, so check there before you try this.

It should also be noted that if you have saved anything to disc since you deleted the file, there is a chance that the file may have been over-written.

1) Make sure that PIP.COM is on the disc that you wish to work with, or alternatively on Drive M:

2) Now erase PIP.COM - I know it sounds stupid, but this is how the procedure works. (Make sure you don't delete your only copy of PIP or you will be in trouble!)

3) Run Basic

4) From Basic type in the following:

POKE 64480,229:POKE 64432,229:POKE  
64348,229:POKE 64040,229 [RETURN]

5) Type SYSTEM and [RETURN] to re-enter CP/M. The prompt should now read F9A> or F9B>, depending on which drive you are in. This is the area where CP/M stores all its erased files.

6) Key in DIR and all erased files should appear, hopefully including the one you wish to recover.

7) Using PIP, move the erased file to group 0 of the disc. You can actually use the deleted PIP for this. (When typing this replace filename.xxx with the name of the file you wish to recover.) Type:  
M:PIP  
M:filename.xxx[g0]=filename.xxx

8) Type user 0 to return to the usual CP/M A> or M> prompt. Type in DIR again and hopefully your file has been recovered.

This process will sadly just reclaim one file at a time, so you'll have to redo the process for each individual file.

## My Drive's Died

**Q:** AFTER many years of care, my beloved 9512 has stopped working. I believe it's the disc drive that's gone, but I haven't seen any 3" disc drives on sale for ages. What do you recommend?  
Brian Gill, Argyll

**A:** Well there are three options. Firstly you could get a new PCW - second hand 9512s can be picked up for around £100 from your local rag, or you could upgrade to a 3.5" machine, or even the PcW 16. The second option is to repair your drive. SD MicroSystems on 07000 736427 have a DIY kit available for £12.50 that will do the trick in most cases. Lastly you could buy a new 3.5" disc drive. Try Pinboard Computers on 01462 894410.

## Manual work on the '16

THE MANUAL for the PcW 16 is not brilliantly written. Screen shots show options that don't exist and there are mistakes throughout. However, after a little experimenting it is possible to fill the gaps the manual missed.

The manual incorrectly states that the quick way to store phrases in the word processor is to press [TASK]+[CTRL]+[F1-8].

If you've tried this, you'll realise it doesn't work. Instead, highlight the phrase, press [CTRL]+[SHIFT] then [F1-8] and hey presto - the phrase is saved. This shortcut is very handy and you'll find it a lot quicker than using the menu command.



## The elusive Mr Elliott

**Q:** In your last issue (Autumn 1997) I read about a new CP/M emulator for the PC. The article stated that the program could be down loaded from the Internet. As I don't have a modem, I wondered if you could publish the author - John Elliott's address.  
James Sharpe, The Wirral

**A:** The embarrassing truth is - we don't know his address. Lots of people have asked this same question, and we've fruitlessly searched everywhere. He doesn't seem to subscribe, or advertise his contact details.

*So please John, if you're out there - please let us know!*

## Sound Advice

AT A RECENT North-West computer market, (held in rotation at various venues throughout the country each year so look out for them in your area) I was able to buy fifty double-density 3.5" discs for £8.00. If the £2.00 entrance fee is also included, this works out at 25 pence a disc.

Having used such cheap discs over many years without any noticeable problems of disc/data corruption (every file is backed-up, just in case, anyway), I can certainly recommend computer markets to PCW Today readers.

Though the goods on display at Computer Markets are mainly for PCs, and therefore discs on sale are more likely to be high-density, such a PCW bargain can still occasionally be found.  
Rod Shinkfield, Chorley

## DTP with LocoScript 4

I HAD completed the publication of my latest book, which included a large number of illustrations created in MicroDesign, just before Release 2 of LocoScript 4 became available.

Immediately, it became apparent that it would have been easier if I could have used the Release 2 facilities in the first place. The original technique involved double passing of pages through the printer, once for the MDP files and once for the LocoScript files. This was very time consuming.

As preparation for the second edition, I have upgraded to Release 2, so I had to convert the .MDP files for use in LocoScript.

Note: A HP Deskjet printer was used in this procedure. It cannot be guaranteed that the parameters used below will be correct for a different printer.

All pages are in A4 format. They have been designed using the following parameters:

### LocoScript

Margins (Scale Pitch 10):

Left	6	A
Right	51	B
Working width	45	C

### Page Layout:

Top gap	2	D
Header zone	2	E
Page Body	41	F
Footer Zone	2	
Bottom Gap	3	
Page length	50	

### MicroDesign

Top left corner of screen at x,y = 0,0

### Window

Designed specifically to match the LocoScript page body and margins:

Top Right	x,y = 5.70, 042 inches
Bottom Left	x,y = 1.17, 7.36 inches

### Giving:

Working Width	4.53 inches = 45-46 tenths (C)
Working Height	6.94 inches + 41-42 sixths (F)

### Preparation of .MDA files

To convert .MDP files to .MDA format for incorporation in LocoScript 4, MicroDesign is started up and the window set as specified above. Each .MDP file is loaded in turn, with the area to be saved precisely set over the window. The files are saved into the same user group on the working disc as the text files that they are intended to accompany.

### Incorporation of pictures in Loco4

LocoScript 4 is then started up. The text

files are edited in turn, each page in which a picture is to be included is culled onto the editing screen, and for each, the following procedure is adopted, noting that it does not matter on which line of the page the 'Picture' is entered:

Tap [F2] and cursor to "New Picture" [ENTER]. Cursor to appropriate .MDA file and [ENTER].

From the menu, fill in as follows:

### Picture

Name	filled automatically - confirm correct
Picture Width	filled automatically - 46 (C)
Picture Height	filled automatically - 21 1/2(F)
Fixed Position	set with the [+] key
Horizontal Position	5 (A) minus 1
Vertical Position	4 (D0 plus (E)
Horizontal scaling	1
Vertical Scaling	2

[ENTER]

Repeat the procedure for all pictures, then print in a normal manner.

Note: The "1/2" in Picture Height and the "2" in Vertical Scaling are factors specific to the hewlett Packard printers. They may not apply in other cases.

Bill Heilbronn

## Basically speaking

IF, LIKE ME, you are not an expert on Basic programming, but enjoy trying out the Basic listings from *PCW Today*, then I offer the following tips:

1) use DICKIT to format a floppy disc in CPM, and label the disc as "PCW Today Basic Listings"; keep the disc for future *PCW Today* listings only.

2) Taking PD Blake's "What's on the menu?" (Issue 7, page 16) as an example, carefully type in the listing. A ruler placed beneath each line will help you keep your place, move it down as you work.

3) You only need type in the lines as far as the REM line. You can always go back and read the REMs in *PCW Today*. Type - 5 REM *PCW Today*. Issue 7. Page 16. "What's on the Menu?", which on pressing [ENTER] will add an extra title line at the top of the listing.

4) Save the finished listing as, for example,

TODAY-1.BAS and type RUN, then [ENTER] to try out the program. If you have made a mistake in your typing, the run will stop at the mistake. If it says there has been a mismatch, etc. in a line (line 310 for example), don't despair. Type "Edit 310" and on pressing [ENTER], line 310 will appear on the screen in editing mode. Carefully check the green line against the listing in *PCW Today* and make any alterations necessary. Press [ENTER] again to leave the editing mode and then re-run the program

5) Having typed in the first part of lines 10 to 340 (page 16), use the editing mode to make the alterations shown in lines 30,60, and 70 (page 17), so saving typing in the whole-lines again.

6) Write on page 16 of *PCW Today* (on which the listing is shown), the filename you have chosen and also include details on which disc the program has been saved.

Rod Shinkfield, Chorley

## Merging documents

IT IS POSSIBLE to insert text from one document into another within LocoScript.

Just load up LocoScript and put in the disc that contains the document you wish to merge with another. Create a new document on this disc, or indeed one of the documents already there. Once you are ready to insert the text, press [F1] and choose to "Insert Text". You will be returned to the disc management screen only this time, the message at the top of the screen says "Inserting Text".

Move the cursor over to the file that you wish to insert and press [ENTER]. You will immediately return to the document editing screen and the text from the other document will merge into it.

Note: If you are still using LocoScript 1, you will find "Insert Text" under the Modes menu, accessed by pressing [F7]

Claire Hatley, Stockport

# Get Connected!

*John Craggs tries out LocoScript's modem kit*

**T**he world has gone communications crazy and the PCW is no longer lagging behind. It is now possible to access the Internet and send faxes with your humble PCW. LocoScript Software now sell a modem kit that will give you direct access to the Information Super-Highway.

I'm not a comms expert. I'm reviewing this kit as a working writer, considering adding e-mail and fax to my trusty PcW9256

## STARTING OUT

The modem is a classic PCW 'bolt-on' extra - using the expansion slot at the rear. If this is already used for existing add-ons you may need an adaptor. Check first with LocoScript. I temporarily abandoned my Powerpack, but things still worked well with only 512K. Later, a 2-way adaptor from LocoScript restored my 1 Meg of RAM.

The kit contains hardware and software, generous cables, a *thorough* instruction book, and Loco's own leaflet. (*Read this leaflet* - the book's set-up instructions are out of date.) Also a months free trial of CIX, an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

**ONE EXTRA:** On a single phone line you'll appreciate a two way splitter. (£1.95 from Argos; personal recommendation.)

Despite coming via LocoScript, this is the Margolis PCW fax kit, featured some years ago in *PCW Plus*. This continued survival suggests a solid and reliable product.

Anything new needs practice, but there are simple automated options in both E-mail and fax modes. And PCWers tend to be 'hands-on' types. You'll only be learning a extra 'layer' of commands. Far better than learning

*everything* from scratch with a PC and comms package. Don't be in a rush to discard years of experience and familiarity. Your PCW will do the job just as well as a feature-laden PC.

Join CIX on-line - using a credit card - or fill in the form and wait for a reply. For on-line, phone CIX first and ask for the appropriate number. If you're patient/nervous then fill in the form and wait for the welcome kit.

## THE FAX

In many ways this seems more complex than the comms side, though the book stresses that Comm+ can be very 'sophisticated' for those who understand programming. There's an additional manual available for comms, but - true to my brief as a beginner - I used only what the kit provided.

The PCWfax book really *does* tell you everything you need to know. With plenty of Loco-style menus to help. Even with only 512K I found the performance satisfactory. You can also send MicroDesign pictures, although I didn't try this.

Faxes are logged automatically, and can be scheduled for delayed sending. A single fax can be sent to multiple destinations. For example: Automated Jobsearch; 'Dear Sir, Do you need a tutor in ...'

## DRAWBACKS

1) The fax software cannot print using a daisywheel printer.

2) Faxes are 'dot pictures', so received documents can't be word processed. A problem for some users, a mere nuisance for others.

3) 'Fax Shriek' annoying anyone who phones when FAX is on automatic. My VoiceMail system recorded both the caller and the shrieking - most unpleasant to play back.

## COMM+

COMM+: E-mail is seductively simple, especially using automatic upload/download.

Load the disc. Type COMM. Pick CIX from the options. Then create e-mails and replies off-line. This saves pounds! Remember [EXIT] is the ESCAPE key.

CIX charge 4p per minute off peak and 6 ppm at peak. *On top of your phone bill!* CIX peak times are 8am - 5pm, Monday to Friday.

You can get started using just the Loco leaflet, the instruction book, and common sense. The book suggests avoiding automatic (option 1) until you've tried a few e-mails 'by hand' (option 2).

Have a non-sending dummy-run to try the text editor. This is very basic - unlike LocoScript - and may initially drive you mad. Why? It has wordwrap when entering text, but backspacing to add missing letters or words causes problems. One-for-one replacement is no problem, the machine simply over-strikes. But to insert a missing letter you need to insert a space first - using the [+ ] key next to your space bar - and then type into the space. If this shoves existing characters off the end of the line they are simply lost, not wrapped around. More irritation than problem. You'll soon adapt.

To understand e-mail conventions - such as subject lines - ask a knowledgeable friend or get a book out of the library.

Try e-mailing yourself. It sounds pretty sad, but no-one else wants your 'experiments'. CIX give you a user name, and within CIX that's all you need in the 'to:' space. For outsiders you need the whole thing, eg, jsmith@netcom.ca



This system doesn't like empty subject lines, sometimes requested by automatic mailservers. For a blank just tap the space bar once before moving down to start your message.

Type a few sentences, then press [EXIT] and [E]. You can save or delete. Save, and it's automatically named CIX#.001.

Now take the 'review' option, which offers edit, display, save, delete, exit. Experiment, then save again.

Exit to main menu. Option 1 will fire up the modem and send CIX#.001 whistling through cyberspace into your mailbox. If all goes well it downloads back onto your 'scratchpad'. Read by selecting the right option.

Scratchpad files are deleted each time a new one is downloaded, unless you use option 7 (use COMM manually) to summon the off-line menu and rename the scratchpad file. A very wise habit.

Experiment with option 7 'off-line' by copying a crowded disc, and try naming, renaming, deleting, etc. It's easy enough, but doesn't quite follow the LocoScript 'first letter shortcut' conventions.

For example, [F] 'sends' whichever file is named in the box at the top. You get 3 choices: (S)sends it to (S)creen for a quick review, (P) sends it to (P)rinter, (T) lets you (T)ransmit.

When your self addressed e-mail comes back try the reply facility. Jot down the six figure message number. (no working office is ever totally paperless) and use it for a reply. Mailing yourself will soon pall, but it's a painless - and private - lesson.

Now try some 'real' e-mail to a friend or colleague!

You could test the system with a subscription to 'TRUE', an e-mail 'magazine'. Send an e-mail to:

join-this-is-true@lyris.net (It's off-beat but harmless.)

When flitting between e-mail and LocoScript you may occasionally hit the wrong key. Don't worry. FATAL - in 'error messages' needn't terrify you. It's not at your end of the system, and there's even a difference between temporary and permanent 'fatal errors'.

## SUMMARY

This kit would earn it's keep for a busy writer/homeworker. It pulled in some work for me during the test period (including this review!). For anyone needing a simple fax/e-mail system I gladly recommend this package. And I don't even get a commission!

## PRICES

33.6k Modem Kit - £179  
2-way adaptor - £19.95

LocoScript Software - 01306 747757

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The new *PCW Today* range now includes cover-discs\*. You can order these separately, or with your your magazine subscription to qualify for a discount. Simply fill out this form (or a copy) and send it to us with the correct payment.

- /// 1 year cover-discs\*: £5.00
- /// 1 year basic subscription: £8.00
- /// 1 year subscription + cover-discs\*: £12.50

*\*Cover-discs are available in 3.5" CP/M format only*

SURNAME // INITIALS //

ADDRESS //

//

//

POSTCODE // TEL //

E-MAIL //

MODEL OF PCW //

SOFTWARE USED //

//

Cheques/POs payable to "PCW Today", 150 Oxford Road,  
Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL

# Preview

Issue 9. Due May 1998

## ROSEANNE vs JOYCE

The Final Verdict. Is the PcW 16 any good?

## TWO GREAT NEW SERIES'

Rod Shinkfield on LocoFile

Kathleen Thorpe on CP/M

## PLUS

Your vote in the PCW Today awards

Amazing PCW Facts

# the mailbag

Send your letters to me: The Editor,  
PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough,  
Teesside TS5 5EL



## PRIZE LETTER

**Wins a computer copy-holder**

**WHAT** has the world got to? Each magazine I get for a classic computer preaches peace and unity within the classic-computer world. But then, when it comes to PCs, all hell breaks loose!

Why can't PC users live in peace. I use CPCs, PCWs and PCs. And I definitely feel I'm committing a sin to all PCW kind - I feel I'm helping them.

Most of my work is done on my PC, even when it is publicising the PCW. My own

PCW is still an original, so the dot matrix print quality wouldn't convince anyone to drop their PC and head for the nearest PCW.

All users should work together to create some kind of unity - programmers should be working to bridge the gap between PCs, Macs and the like as well as the PCW. They should be keeping the classics alive.  
**Robert Nisbet, Oxford**

*PCW Today: Fine sentiments Robert, but sadly in this cut-throat world of the computer industry we rarely see unity and friendship. Still, you've won a terrific copy-holder to use with your PCW or one of your other computers.*

## COPYRIGHT CONCERN

**AS A NEW** subscriber to your magazine, I have been wondering what happens on the demise of a periodical so far as copyright is involved - ie *PCW Plus*.

Is it legal to list the names of the PCW clubs who regularly contributed to that magazine? Surely this spirit can be kept alive if lists of these people could be set up again, or am I being naive?

Unfortunately I have not been able to find such a club in my own area - the Ribble Valley. Is there someone out there interested in forming a PCW club here? I trust this is not a negative attitude on my part.

It is gratifying to know that someone has taken up the challenge of producing a PCW magazine. I spoke to Locomotive Software not long ago, they seemed quite confident that there are 100,000 PCWs still in use in the UK.

Finally a question. Is there any difference between the PcW Rescue Disc (unmarked) and the Rescue Disc marked v1.11?

I have two PcW 16s, they seemed such a snip at £200 + work stations from Currys. I

find a world of difference from my 8512s - not that I'm knocking the Joyce at all. Far from it, I had four of them when I was in business and brought one home when I retired. It is now ten years old and still going strong.

**Edward Green, Clitheroe**

*PCW Today: No, it's not illegal to print the names and addresses of the various clubs. You'll find that Club Scene was taking a short break last issue - due to lack of space. It is a regular feature of the magazine. Anyone who wishes to start a PCW club in the Ribble Valley, please let me know.*

*There are few differences between the Rescue Disc supplied with the '16 and version 1.11. The purpose of each update is to fix the bugs as they are found in the operating System.*

## LOCO'S TOPS

**PLEASE** find subscription for another two years of *PCW Today*, the best computer magazine by far.

I totally agree with Peter Smith of Oldham about LocoScript 4 (Issue 7). It is dead easy to load and use. What I don't agree with is the graphics. MicroDesign is far superior to

in this department. So Peter, why not use both in conjunction with one another, and you could produce the most wonderful results.

**Ron Briggs, Sidcup**

*PCW Today: LocoScript 4 is an excellent product and the latest version is faster and better than ever. The graphics manipulation has also been greatly enhanced.*



## UPDATE FOR FREE

**READING** the news article on page 4 of the latest issue (7) of *PCW Today*, I spotted in the text that there had been several updates of the PcW 16 operating system.

After several phone calls I finally ascertained that if one contacted Betacom Care Department on 0181 3446200, they will send you the latest version (1.12) of the OS free of charge.

I purchased my PcW 16 in December 1996 and had the operating system 1.04 which used to crash at the drop of a hat. The latest version has defied all my attempts to crash it.

Would it not be beneficial to owners of PcW 16s who subscribe to *PCW Today*, to make them aware that they are using an obsolete operating system.  
**John Williams, Lincoln**

*PCW Today: Thanks for your advice. You were lucky - many people have failed to get the latest OS in this way. It was my understanding that Amstrad had decided it was not viable to send updates by post. They have posted the latest version on their Internet site*

### YOU WERE WRONG

**I MUST take issue with you on the LocoScript 4 vs Protext comparison in your piece on LocoScript 4 Release 2 (Issue 7).**

- 1) The battle has NOT been a long and bitter one. There is no battle.
- 2) As to which is the best word processor on a PCW, that depends what the user wants.

If it's printing in columns (with or without printing in colour) Protext has been able to do that for twelve years, and I understand Loco4 *still* only shows the columns on successive screenpages rather than side by side as Protext does.

And how long does it take to print a columned page? I leave that to you and your readers to prove, but columned print takes Protext no longer than any other page. That is, very nippy.

And does Loco4 support ANY printer, and at no cost once the user has the basic program? Protext does. If we don't have a printer driver we write one free.

Loco4 (I presume without LocoSpell or LocoMerge or LocoAnything Else) costs 39.95 by the price quoted in PCW Today. Protext, including Spell Checking and Mailmerge, costs 25.00 and it's faster in every respect. At least, if it isn't, I have yet to find the area where it's slower.

It is also extremely user-friendly installed in The Network, it works with hard drives, and it is a natural program to use alongside MicroDesign to edit and prepare the text part of a piece of DTP.

Protext on the PCW has always been seen as a natural partner to MicroDesign, so

### MANUAL LABOUR

**I TRUST that I am in order in making a photo-copy of page 12 (issue 6), the article on PCW 16 "quick steps". The quick-steps do make a difference - I wish that Amstrad had included them in the instruction book.**

The reason for all this is that I have acquired a PCW 16. Information of this kind, up to now, has only been let out in bits and pieces. Now you have spilled the complete "beans". Time someone did!

Frankly I'm not impressed with the PCW

there has not been any attention given to incorporating an "easy to access" graphics function. It can be done now, but it's very awkward and not the best way to work. Standing on an encyclopedia can get you to the top shelf of a bookcase, but a stepladder's better!

On a CPC (Amstrad's close cousin to the PCW/PcW range) there are several programs which add graphics incorporation to the program, and there's even a WYSIWYG addition to the CPC version of Protext on the way, so that what will be italics on the paper is seen as italics on the screen. The program is called Fidelity and, who knows, a PCW version may follow if the demand is seen to be there.

Incidentally, Protext for the PCW is still regarded as "in development", and 1998 will be a VERY significant year for the program.

Perhaps you should run a side by side feature comparison before you dismiss Protext. I would be very happy to furnish details upon request or perhaps we could compare them in your office (or some "neutral" territory) with a couple of impartial observers?

I'm "up for it", how about LocoScript?  
**Brian Watson, Protext Software**

*PCW Today: Sounds like a good idea to me. I'm always ready to be proved wrong and you make some strong arguments in favour of Protext. We do however attempt to be neutral and our review was an honest opinion that we stand by. Obviously there will be many who disagree with me, but that's the whole point.*

*Incidentally, are you sure there's no battle between LocoScript and Protext? You got in a couple of digs against LocoScript in the space of this letter!*

16 compared with my PCW 8512. True, everything works at a much faster rate than the PCW 8512, but that is not everything. The only thing that really does "work for me" is the spreadsheet. I do my income tax calculations on it. I think that there is a lot more mileage in the old PCWs. I may be speaking out of turn, but I expect my PCW 8512 will see me out - very easy to service and repair  
**Geoffrey Sale, Luton**

*PCW Today: Lots of people copied the '16 quick steps. You're not really supposed to do it, but I'll let you all off this once! Who knows why the manual missed them out!*

### I THINK HE LIKES IT!

**WOW, what a great magazine! I had been told that the PCW scene was dead, but when I found your address in the LocoScript catalogue, I wrote off immediately.**

Then, just before I was going to college, a big brown envelope popped through the door. I quickly opened it and began to read. I had only got halfway through by the time it was for me to go, so I took it with me.

At every chance I had during the day I read another article.

Only one thing could make this mag even better and that would be a cover disc (I know you would need 3" and 3.5") that could include the best public domain around and Basic programs by readers.

PS: I think LocoScript 4 is a great program, better even than the ones on my PC which now takes second place behind LS4!

**Brett Cook, Wigston**

*PCW Today: Glad you like the magazine. We do our humble best. The good news is that we are introducing cover-discs as of the next issue. The only snag is that it'll cost you an extra fiver to get them. And sadly they're only going to be available as 3.5" format.*

### IN LIMBO NO LONGER

**WHEN PCW Plus ceased publication I thought, probably like many other Amstrad PCW users, we would be left in limbo, without a friendly guiding hand to answer any problems that would arise.**

Thanks to the advert in the LocoScript catalogue, a prayer has been answered and once again, we PCW users have a much needed friend. May I wish you a long publishing life and many readers.

May I suggest that you advertise the mag as much as possible. The lack of advertising was the downfall of PCW Plus not its content. Information sent to the many Amstrad clubs could possibly create further readers.

**A.G Owen, Longfield**

*PCW Today: Again, thanks for your appreciation. We are acutely aware of the importance of advertising. We are constantly striving to get as much publicity as possible and I would be grateful for readers help in this.*

# Letters with LocoScript

*It's the fourth part of Rod Shinkfield's popular series*

**I**F YOU have been following this column's advice over the last few issues of *PCW Today*, you should have your LocoScript discs organised in your disc storage box where they are best protected from damaging grit and dust.

Copies of your letters should all be file-named and easy to find as they have been saved in alphabetical order in their groups.

And you should have now created and saved an index file in every group to better review the letters' key points. Your next task will be to create an address file.

Open a document in group PPP, where all letters to *PCW Today* are saved, and name the document as ADDRESS.PPP. Remember, as with the index files, there will be an ADDRESS.nnn file needed in each group. So the file in group AAA would be named as ADDRESS.AAA and so on.

In each address file, all the addresses corresponding to the group letter are listed. Therefore the contact details for *PCW Today* will be printed here.

Each name and address in the document is set-out as it would appear on the envelope. The first name should still appear first, even though the name and addresses are placed in alphabetical order - based on the surname of the person, or the trade name of the company. And, just as important, each name and address has been placed on a separate page.

If you can remember the page-number of a particular address, or if you checked it beforehand, it could be printed directly onto a label or envelope, using the "Print part of Document" facility. If you do this, there's no need to open the address file

You could even block-copy a name and address from the address file and insert it in another document, or place it where it would show through the window of an envelope.

If you're not sure which page, a particular address is on, it would be best to check the page number first. Watch out, because each newly added name and address will alter the numbering of every following page.

Whether you prefer using a roll of single labels, or an A4 sheet of specially prepared sticky-backed labels, or if you favour printing directly onto the envelopes, you probably need to set-up your printer specially. A tractor feed may need adding to a dot matrix printer to feed in the continuous paper. Some printers - inkjets and lasers - may need the cut-paper sheets removed from their sheet feeder and the settings altered to take the thicker envelopes.

Also, there are some printers that have a special slot for feeding in envelopes, without the need to clear out the sheet feeder first. Some people even prefer not to bother with a tractor at all, but to feed the continuous labelling through the roller by hand.

Whatever method you use, having gone to so much trouble to address an envelope, why not print several envelopes at a go? It can be very handy to have a stack of your more frequently-used names and addresses already on envelopes when you are rushing to catch the post.

Any additional information, such as telephone numbers, notes e-mail addresses, even the individual's birthday could be placed beneath the name and address page, on the next page down. Provided only the address page is called up for printing, such an additional page of notes won't interfere. And, because each ADDRESS.nnn only

holds the addresses from the group it's in, the address file is less likely to become over-large. So now we also have a handy address file in each group on all four letter discs.

A letter TEMPLATE.STD on which your own name, address and normal letter layout reside in group 0 of all four letter discs would be very useful too.

Creating a letter layout TEMPLATE.STD and envelope addressing files will be the subject of my next LocoScript tutorial.

But, for now, it is time to consider the other four discs that were formatted and put to one side some time ago. These four discs are to be the all-important back-up discs. If you have ever suffered a mishap resulting in lost files, you will know the wisdom of backing up your work. As mentioned previously, only the words BACK UP on their labels will distinguish these four back up discs from the identically labelled letter discs.

On single drive machines, such as my *PcW 10*, I prefer to copy discs using CP/M and DISCKIT as there are usually less disc changes to make than when copying LocoScript.

All that remains now is for you to copy all four letter discs. Store the back up discs in a separate disc storage box so they don't get mixed up.

Now, if a letter disc should fail, or becomes damaged, you still have everything backed up. Make a copy of the back up disc which then becomes the replacement letter disc. It is false economy to try to re-use such a faulty disc, so throw it in the bin.

Be consistent with whatever system you use, and you may never run out of stamps.

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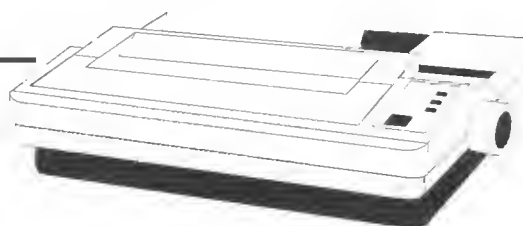
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# Get more from your discs

*David Landers enters the mysterious world of tracks and sectors*

**F**ORMATTING floppies - hardly one of life's most interesting tasks! The majority of PCW owners simply use LocoScript or Diskit and think no more about it. But there are alternatives: programs that can format faster to waste less of your time; format larger to waste less of your disc space. Interested now?

To explain how it's possible to get a quart into a pint pot, we need to look at what happens when a disc is formatted. A matrix of concentric rings (tracks) and radial divisions (sectors) has to be created on a disc before the PCW can use it.

Each side of a CF2 (8000-series drive A: disc) has 40 tracks, whereas a CF2DD (everything else) has 80 per side - 160 total.

A more fundamental difference, though, is that a CF2 is formatted in a drive with a single read/write head, requiring the disc to be turned over in order to process its reverse side, but a CF2DD is made in a drive boasting two read/write heads which access both sides at once. In each case, the standard PCW format lays down 9 sectors - like nine slices of a cake.

Obviously, 3.5" discs go into 3.5" drives. They can only be inserted one way round, so they are always formatted as CF2DDs. However even when the disc physically fits the drive, the two PCW formats are basically incompatible - needing a twin-drive 8512 to act as go-between.

A single-sided 3" drive won't do anything at all with a CF2DD disc; a double-sided 3" drive can read a CF2 but can't write to it without special help - which comes in the form of Three Inch Software's "9512 Rescue Kit".

This program allows a PCW9512 not only to format a disc which can be used in an 8256, but also to copy files to it. The Rescue Kit costs £ 9.95 - Three Inch can be contacted on 01908 690704.

At one time, Amsoft sold special 3" discs for double-sided drives (at a special price!). Eventually they admitted that there was no real difference between these blue-jacketted, CF2DD discs and the cheaper, red-jacketted, CF2 type. So one 3" floppy is much the same as any other, until it is formatted. And, unless it has been damaged or is of singularly poor quality, a CF2 can be reformatted as a CF2DD (and vice-versa).

Incidentally, on the subject of damaged floppies, Three Inch Software have another intriguing utility which allows such discs to be re-used by creating a special format that prevents access to 'bad' blocks.

We refer to CF2DD discs as '720k' format, and CF2s as '180k' (per side). So why do we end up with just 706k or 173k being available? The answer is that space is reserved for other purposes. As you'll be aware, a directory must be maintained on the disc so that the operating system can find the data. That takes up relatively little room, but one whole track is then set aside to allow the possibility of making adjustments to the directory structure via CP/M's INITDIR utility. This track is also where a 'boot sector' message is recorded for Start-of-Day discs.

Very few people ever use INITDIR and not many of the floppies that you format will become Start-of-Day discs, but both LocoScript and Diskit always keep a track reserved - just in case. Clearly, there'd be more room for files

if that track could be hold normal data.

This can be done with CF2 discs by using 'CPC Data format': a format from earlier Amstrad computers that the PCW recognises. It gives 178k - not a huge increase but every little counts with expensive 3" discs. Protext, the CP/M word processor, is able to produce CPC Data format in an 8000-series A: drive ('dformd' command), as are various disc utility programs. There isn't any genuine equivalent for double-sided drives, however.

Something which should be stressed is that, although the PCW may accept non-standard discs in a suitable drive, you can only disc-copy like to like. To make a copy of a CPC Data disc, for instance, you'll need another of that same type already formatted - then either LocoScript or Diskit will copy one to the other quite happily. And do remember that you should use your machine's standard format for Start-of-Day discs. That apart, all the formats described here are accepted by PCW programs, including LocoScript, as normal discs insofar as reading/writing data is concerned.

Moonstone Computing are credited with inventing a modified PCW format which offers a truly significant increase in capacity.

They worked out that there were enough gaps between sectors to fit in an extra one - thus producing their 10 sector 'XFormat'. The XCF2 gives 193k; the XCF2DD 784k. These can be made by several disc utility programs: the admirable DU53.COM, for example. XFormat is reliable and widely recognised - the transfer program, 22DISK, even accepts it on a PC!

Disc access (the time it takes to find



data) is marginally slower with 10 sectors - but, on balance, 8000-series owners gain considerably by using XCF2 discs in their A: drives. As well as 20k extra file space per side, they get 96 directory entries instead of the normal 64.

By comparison though, the double-density XCF2DD format - whether applied to a 3" or a 3.5" disc - has a major disadvantage for general use. PCW8512 owners will know that a 1k file on a CF2 grows to 2k when it is copied to a CF2DD in drive B:.

The 'block-size' allotted to files is fixed by the operating system, and relates to disc capacity. By exceeding a pre-set limit, the XCF2DD format jumps to the next block-size - meaning that its minimum space allocation is 4k, and file sizes go up in 4k increments. A file which is 5k on a CF2 or an XCF2 will take up 6k on a CF2DD and 8k on an XCF2DD.

In practice, if you are storing small files, you'll get fewer of them on a 784k disc than would fit on the standard 706k variety.

Clearly, the double-density XFormat comes into its own with really big files - typically database files - and the same is true of an alternative d/d extended format devised by the Joyce Computer Club of the Netherlands. It appears that PCW 3" drives are sufficiently flexible to be able to access additional tracks; so the JCC came up with a 42 track format for single-sided drives (182k) and a 168 track equivalent for double-sided drives (740k).

But then the Dutch played their trump card... they combined these extra tracks with XFormat's extra sector. The resultant 'SuperFormat' gives a whopping 201k in the smaller 3-inch drive (still at 1k block-size) and all of 824k in the larger one (4k blocks). And if you're prepared to accept a reduced number of directory entries, it can even be stretched a little further than that!

SuperFormat is just one of several formats offered by the JCC's excellent DISCTOOL program. It has to be said, though, that SuperFormat won't suit every PCW. 3.5" drives don't like it - it was, after all, designed specifically for 3" drives - and those extra tracks can prove troublesome on less-than-perfect discs.

Our final formatting trick is a seemingly bizarre idea for storing data on the 'wrong' side of a 3" CF2DD. Ten years ago - April 1988 - *8000 Plus* magazine published a piece which claimed that part of a double-density disc was masked due to the offset positioning of the drive's two read-write heads. The article described how to format these hidden tracks, and included a Basic listing to write special address markers on the disc - thereby allowing access to an extra 58k simply by turning the disc over in the drive...

The article, by Richard Clayton (the man who wrote LocoScript), had all the hallmarks of an April fool. But it wasn't! It was a deliberate double-bluff and was absolutely genuine - as the editor confirmed in the following issue. Unfortunately most readers had already dismissed it as a spoof, and failed to exploit this 'free' capacity on their 3" CF2DD discs.

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### "The article had all the hallmarks of an April fool"

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The formula definitely works - and it doesn't suffer from the block-size problem which afflicts all other expanded CF2DD floppies. If it has any drawbacks, I've yet to find them - apart from a relatively minor one, in that the special address code disrupts CP/M's SHOW utility.

Richard Clayton's scheme can even be used with XFormat and SuperFormat discs (though the 4k minimum file size then applies, of course). The extra space rises in proportion to the capacity

of the extended format - giving a further 64k with XFormat and 68k with SuperFormat. In the latter case, this opens up the possibility of a near-900k PCW disc!

I think I mentioned something earlier about 'faster formatting'. Well, exact figures vary according to the type of drive and the software version, but LocoScript and Diskit both take around 2 minutes to format a CF2DD (720k) disc. Yet some other utilities can do it in 1 minute. How? Usually by cutting down on error checking.

This hardly matters when you are reformatting known 'good' discs - but, if you are suspicious about them, a slower format with more careful checking would be sensible. DISCTOOL is particularly helpful here, because it offers a choice in the matter: 'check' or 'no check' during the format, plus a fastidious 'verify' option afterwards.

When programs are able to verify a disc, this, too, can vary quite considerably in terms of the time (and care) that's taken. Presumably though, if you've decided that a disc needs verifying, you'll want it done as thoroughly as possible.

The utilities - DU53 and DISCTOOL are both public domain programs, and I'll be glad to pass them on to anyone who posts me a formatted disc (either 3.5" or 3"; CF2 or CF2DD) plus a stamped, addressed, return label.

Richard Clayton has given permission for me to include his 'Disc Expander' Basic program as well - but please bear in mind that it only works with 3-inch, double-density discs.

Send your disc to me, David Landers, Brinkburn Garden Cottage, Longframlington, Morpeth, NE65 8AR.

Okay - formatting is never going to be much fun - but it can become more fruitful.

# Checking out the Options

*MD maestro, PD Blake, is back with another beginners guide to DTP*

**Y**ET AGAIN another article without pictures. That's because this time we are going to go through the ins and outs of the Systems Options Section of Microdesign. Most of these options are set when you first make your start of day disc with MD3MAKE, but if you add memory, or perhaps a new printer to your PCW then you may have to reset them.

To get to the options section, simply press [EXIT] in the usual way and select [O]ptions from the memory. You will then be shown a screen containing lines of options ranging from memory to disc format, and including various choices.

In the Options section there is only one function available, except for [EXIT], this is saveOPTS and allows you to save all of your new options to a file, which will be implemented when you next boot-up Microdesign, it will not work immediately, you must re-boot.

However, before you change anything you need to know what all the choices are and what they mean, so here we go.

The first choice is an important one and affect the amount of memory you have available for text and fonts. You may set either 16k or 32k for text. If you choose 32k for text then the extra 16k (16k being the default setting) is taken from the memory allocated to fonts. So if you have made your own BOOT template which uses large fonts and they need the extra 16k then you must either change it or use the 16k option for text. If you try to start Microdesign with your own BOOT template and you haven't allocated enough memory to fonts then an error will be caused and the program will fail to run. You may then have to remake your start of day disc, so be very careful when changing this option.

The next set of options are the printer settings, the first being INTERFACE, which selects the printer port. Here you have four settings, either PCWmatrix, centronic, serial or 9512par. If you are using an 8256, an 8512 or a 9256 with it's original dot-matrix printer then choose the first setting.

If You are using an external printer via a rampot then choose centronics. If you are using a 9512 or 9512+ and are using an external printer connected to the built in parallel port then choose 9512par. Finally if you are using a serial printer connected via a RS232 link then you need to choose serial.

The next printer setting is CEN/PAR, which is only operative if you are using the centronic or 9512par settings in the INTERFACE menu. You can set this to normal or whizz to increase the speed of printing, though there may be problems depending on your hardware if you do use whizz.

The third printer setting is the PRINTERTYPE, which speaks for itself, either 9-pin, 24-pin, deskjet, laser or bubblejet. Simply mark the box that best describes your printer. Following this simple setting is one which may be slightly more complicated, depending on what kind of printer you are using, the SUB-TYPE setting. There are four sub-types to choose from A,B,C and D. Below I have listed the settings which are suitable for each type of printer, if the setting isn't listed next to your type of printer then don't use it. For better details see your printer manual, or just try them out and see what happens:

**9-PIN: A,B or C**  
**24-PIN: A or B**  
**LASER: A,B or C**  
**DESKJET: A or B**  
**BUBBLEJET: A,B,C or D**

The next setting is for 9 or 24-pin dot matrix and simply sets the maximum printing density in dots-per-inch (DPI). This setting can be either half or full. Again this setting depends on your printer and whether it uses quad or hex density. Check your manual.

The paper setting which follows is relatively simple and relates to page length in 1/6s of an inch. The default setting is 70 for A4 paper but a setting of 66 is best for continuous 11" paper.

Lastly in printer setup comes COPIES.

This is used to define how many copies can be printed in one print run. You would normally set this amount from the actual printing menu, which is set by default to allow 1-9 copies, or X. If you choose X in the printing menu then the amount set here at COPIES is referred to. This amount can be anywhere between 1 and 99.

If you use a mouse with MicroDesign you will need, sometime, to customise the mouse options. The first is, obviously, MOUSE, which refers to the type of mouse you are using. In this setting you can have OFF (no mouse at all), KEMPSTON, AMX and KEYMOUSE. These are the three most popular types of mouse, most of you will have Creative's own Keymouse.

Next are the mouse's movement, double click speed and the speed at which it plots during operations such as free hand drawing. Set these to what you feel comfortable with. Experiment with a few different settings before you finalise them.

As well as all the specific settings there is also a list of miscellaneous ones. The first is the readout (cursor position) and can be either OFF, PIXELS, INCHES or MM. Set this to the measurement you are happiest with. MicroDesign makes a valiant effort at measurements, but do not depend on them, they can be way out.

The next option to deal with is ASCII type and is used when importing text from Protext or Wordstar. The alter is rarely used now, but was once the industry-standard word processor.DISC FORMAT is next and allows you to determine whether discs will be verified or not when using the formatting utility from the filing utilities menu.

Finally comes SCAN SOURCE, and this simply tells whether you are using a hand held scanner or a fax machine. Both input devices can be used to scan in pictures to MicroDesign.

Next time we'll be going through the Graphics screen. In the summer there'll be a tutorial on scanning, so now might be a good time to treat yourself to a scanner.

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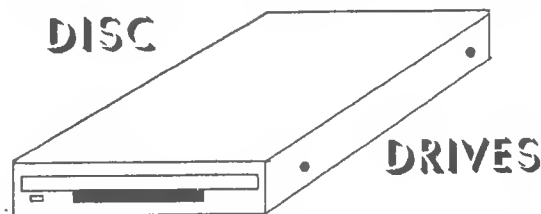
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# Publish Yourself

*Adrian Braddy tries a spot of DTP on the PcW 16*

**D**ESPITE its many critics, and a disturbing lack of external software, the PcW 16 is still a superb word-processing system. And most of the people who own the PcW are perfectly happy to make do with just that.

So what can you do with the '16s unique word-basher? There's the obvious letter and essay writing, or you might even trot out the odd novel or two. But what about editing a newsletter? Okay, so the traditional PCW users may sneer, but the '16 is actually just as capable as LocoScript at page layout. In fact, it has one major advantage. What you see on the screen is what goes on the paper.

And that's not all - the fonts on the '16 go up to a whopping 72 pt - LocoScript users can only dream!

With the super sixteen, it's possible to produce a great-looking newsletter that even includes a touch of basic graphics. I am going to create a simple A4 newsletter for the fictional village of Tubston in this tutorial, but the possibilities for you are endless.

Your club, society, church school, college, or even your work-place would all benefit from a newsletter. And best of all, they're tremendous fun to produce. Why not give it a go.

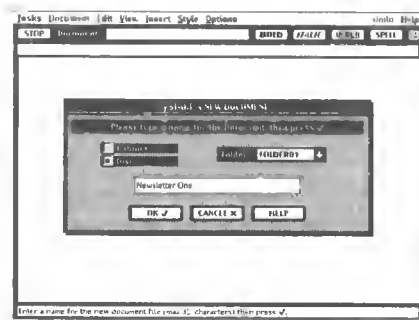
Right, let's get cracking. The best place to start is at the beginning, so switch on your PeW. From the "desktop screen" press [F1] to enter the word processor. Put a fresh disc in the drive (although the manual tells you to use the cabinet, you'll find that using discs is safer and simpler - the cabinet soon fills up) and press [BLUE] to start a new document.

In these tutorials, you'll find that I

show you how to carry-out every task possible with the keyboard, not the mouse.

There are two reasons for this: Firstly if you can exploit the full potential of the keyboard, your work will speed-up dramatically, despite popular belief, the mouse actually slows you down. And secondly, the manual tends to stick with the mouse - this gives you a new angle.

So, back to business. Press [TAB] twice to move the cursor down to the "Disc" option and press [SPACE] to confirm. The disc drive will purr (older PCWs tend to grate rather than purr) and a cursor will appear in the box where the file-name is to go. Give the document a name - I called mine Newsletter One - original huh? The great thing about the '16 is that you can put spaces into file-names, and they can be as long as you want (even Windows restricts you to eight letters)

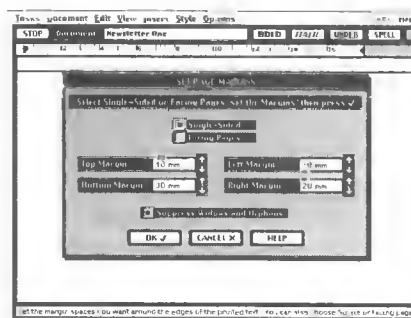


**FIRST THINGS FIRST:** The Document Startup screen

Press [ENTER] to bring up the template screen. Use the cursor keys to select the template you want. Unless you've already created your own A4 template you should select the Blank Template and press [ENTER]. You should immediately shoot into the text-editing screen.

Now's the time, if you haven't already done so, to create the template for your newsletter. Press [TASK] and [D] to

pull down the Document menu. Then tap [Z] to select "Set Paper Size". A box will appear in the centre of your screen asking you to choose a paper size. A4 should be selected - if it is not - use [TAB] and [SPACE] to mark the A4 box, pressing [ENTER] to confirm.



**MARGIN MAKER:** The size is right!

Pull down the document menu again with [TASK]+[D], then this time press [M] to "Set Page Margins". When the box appears, it will detail the size of the margins, or the gap between the text and the edge of the paper. Now the size of the margins you need will depend on what printer you have. Some printers need bigger margins than others as they can physically only print on a certain area of the page. Experiment yourself until you get it right.

For my setup the following settings are about right: Top Margin: 10mm/ Bottom Margin 30mm/Left Margin: 10mm/Right Margin: 20mm. If you prefer to work in inches or centimetres, just give your figure a suffix of in or cm respectively - the computer will convert them automatically. Once again, use [TAB] and [SPACE] to scroll between the measurements. When a figure is highlighted, type a new figure and it will replace the number already there. Once you're satisfied, hit [ENTER]. The PeW will now alter your on-screen page size accordingly.

If you wish, at this point, you can make the template you have just

created into a permanent template that you can use again in other documents. Press [TASK] and [D] to bring up the Document menu, then hit [N] for "Make New Template". Type in a name like "A4 Document" and press [ENTER] to save it. This template will now be listed with the others whenever you create a new document.

Back at the editing screen it's time to start producing the newsletter. First up is the "mast-head" or title. If you look at the majority of newsletters, they have the title in large text, perhaps with a logo. We'll attempt a logo in future, but the rest is pretty simple.

The title - in my case it's "Tubston Village News" - will be highlighted and boxed, with some basic information included too.

Firstly 'draw' a line that stretches right across the top of the page. There are three line-making keys on the PcW keyboard, make your choice. I used the key at the top right of the numeric keyboard. On the next line write the name of your newsletter, it shouldn't be too long and it should immediately let the reader know what they are reading. Don't bother adding any effects just yet, we'll do that in a bit. Beneath the title, place another line, identical to the one above, thus boxing it in.



■ **FIRST LOOK:** Getting started

On the fourth line, type the issue number, the date and the price, or whatever else you want. Try and space each separate element out so that they spread equally across the page. For example, have the date in the centre, with the issue number on the far-left, and the price on the far-right. Box this off too with another line.

Now we'll work on the effects. The title needs to be marked before we can start playing with it. Marking is far easier with the keyboard than with the mouse. Place the cursor at the start of the title and press [CTRL] and [M], then move the cursor to the end of the title and press [CTRL] and [D], visibly marking the text. A good tip when negotiating the cursor around the document is to press [CTRL] and the arrow keys together, the cursor will shoot around the screen like there's no tomorrow.

With the text marked, it needs to be centred. By far the easiest way to do this is to press [F2], this centres instantly. Mark-up the title again and this time press [F5]. This makes the text bolder. Mark the text again, as before, and enter the Style menu by pressing [TASK] and [S]. Now hit [X] to "Change Text Style". Using [TAB] and [SPACE] to navigate around the screen choose the font and point size you require for the title. I used Swiss in 24 point. Press [ENTER] to confirm your settings. The text should now change as you wanted it.

Things are looking pretty good already, but how about a graphic to liven things up a little? The '16 is sadly limited so far as graphics go, but there are a couple of things you can do. At the back of the manual you will find a table of the entire character set. Alternatively, press [TASK] [I] and then [A] to view it on screen. Amongst the versatile set is a cross that would be perfect for a parish magazine mast head and a selection of circles that would improve any title-piece. Just use your imagination.

I chose the diamonds, which magically appear when you press [SHIFT]+[CTRL]+[D] and they certainly improve the look of the title.

You've completed the mast-head - easy wasn't it! Now, I would save the whole thing, either as a document by pressing [F8], or as preferably as a template, by using the process described earlier - though it's really up

to your individual preference. When you save as a template, you will be asked if you want to save the text, choose yes, and every time you create a document using that template, the mast-head will appear at the top of the page.



■ **FINISHED:** The final product

Your final task is the simplest to complete, yet ironically it will probably take you the most time - writing the copy onto the page. This is easy, just so long as you keep your page design simple. Use a different typeface to the one in the mast head and use a standard size for the text. Around 10 or 12 point is about right. Use large eye-catching headlines that draw the reader into the story. Those in my newsletter are 36 point, but experiment yourself until you find the right combination.

As a final touch, why not stick another line in to the bottom, and perhaps even put a page number beneath it. Before you print-out it is a good idea to check the print preview to make sure there are no obvious errors.



■ **PREVIEW:** Is it all okay?

The newsletter described here is very basic, and was produced in around fifteen minutes. Once you've got the hang of it, you will soon be producing far more sophisticated pages yourself. Happy designing!

# Cracking the Lottery

*Basic programmer - PD Blake - is getting all randomised!*

**R**ANDOMISE! Can anyone tell me what is random about the way this command works, because I haven't noticed anything yet.

RANDOMISE works by picking a starting point somewhere in the data you have typed in. First it asks for a random number seed so that it can randomly pick the starting point. So this is what would happen with the following data:

COW PIG SHEEP HORSE  
GOAT CHICKEN

Firstly, you would be asked for a random number, and if you entered 1 (for arguments sake), RANDOMISE would start at, say SHEEP and then use the following data items as you have specified. The next time you run it, if

you entered 1 again, then again it would start at SHEEP and you would get the same results.

For quite some time, in fact since the national lottery started. I have pondered ways of using RANDOMISE to make a program which would allow my young daughter to pick our weekly numbers. It turned out to be an impossible task to get a truly random answer each time.

At last, after writing many programs using INKEY\$ and umpteen different variables I have finally come up with a program which will pick six numbers almost completely at random without using RANDOMISE.

So What! I hear you cry, what's wrong

with buying a lucky-dip. Well that is another answer to the problem, but I don't think your local newsagents will let you use its lottery machine to pick other data too. The following listing is for lottery numbers (or picking six numbers ranging from 1 to 49 without any being repeated), but it can easily be changed to allow for any form of data needing to be randomly selected, a lot of clubs and societies run competitions using membership numbers, these could easily be incorporated into the program by adding extra lines, or even by reading them from an input file.

So here it is, your very own lucky-dip machine. All you have to do is type it in, and add the extra lines to make up 49 numbers. There are only 10 here to save space.

```

1  OPTION RUN
10  CLS$=CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H":PRINT CLS$:PRINT"Press any key"
20  K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 40
30  N$="-01-":GOTO 1000
40  K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 60
50  N$="-02-":GOTO 1000
60  K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 80
70  N$="-03-":GOTO 1000
80  K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 100
90  N$="-04-": GOTO 1000
100 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 120
110 N$="-05-":GOTO 1000
120 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 140
130 N$="-06-":GOTO 1000
140 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 160150 N$="-07-":GOTO 1000
160 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 180
170 N$="-09-":GOTO 1000
180 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 20
190 N$="-10-":GOTO 1000
1000 N%=N%+1
1020 IF N%=1 THEN GOSUB 2000:NUMBER1$=N$:N$="":GOTO 10
1040 IF N%=2 THEN GOSUB 2000:NUMBER2$=N$:N$="":GOTO 10.
1060 IF N%=3 THEN GOSUB 2000:NUMBER3$=N$:N$="":GOTO 10

```



```

1080 IF N%=4 THEN GOSUB 2000:NUMBER4$=N$:N$="":GOTO 10
1100 IF N%=5 THEN GOSUB 2000:NUMBER5$=N$:N$="":GOTO 10
1120 IF N%=6 THEN GOSUB 2000:NUMBER6$=N$:N$="":GOTO 10
1140 PRINT CLS$:PRINT:PRINT TAB(30)CHR$(27)+"p"+NUMBER1$+NUMBER2$+
      NUMBER3$+NUMBER4$+NUMBER5$+NUMBER6$+CHR$(27)+"q":PRINT:PRINT"Do
      you want a printed copy (Y/N)"
1160 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 1160
1180 IF K$="Y" OR K$="y" THEN GOTO 1240
1200 IF K$="N" OR K$="n" THEN END
1220 GOTO 1160
1240 PRINT:PRINT"Ensure there is paper in the printer and press any key...."
1250 LPRINT CHR$(27);"m";CHR$(1);:LPRINT CHR$(27);"W";CHR$(1);:LPRINT
      NUMBER1$+NUMBER2$+NUMBER3$+NUMBER4$+NUMBER5$+NUMBER6$:LPRINT
      CHR$(27);"@":END
2000 IF N$=NUMBER1$ THEN N%=N%-1:GOTO 10
2010 IF N$=NUMBER2$ THEN N%=N%-1:GOTO 10
2020 IF N$=NUMBER3$ THEN N%=N%-1:GOTO 10
2030 IF N$=NUMBER4$ THEN N%=N%-1:GOTO 10
2040 IF N$=NUMBER5$ THEN N%=N%-1:GOTO 10
2050 IF N$=NUMBER6$ THEN N%=N%-1:GOTO 10
2060 RETURN

```

As I have already said, this program was written with my young daughter in mind, so is used simply by continually pressing keys(which small children, especially my two year old Rebecca, find very easy and seem to think is great fun) until the result appears on the screen. Once your numbers appear, you have the option of a printout, which will be in large, quality type, ready for you to take to the shop.

This program has been tried and tested quite a few times now and never have two results been the same.

SO, how does it work? It's quite simple really, all of the lines containing INKEY\$ commands simply tell the program to loop to the next INKEY\$ line until a key is pressed, when a key is pressed the next

number (N\$) is selected from the following line. If the number has already been chosen then the sub-routine in line 2000 will reject it and another will be picked. Once six different numbers have been selected the program will offer you the option of having the result printed out and will then end. Easy isn't it, and don't forget about me if you win a million.

## John Craggs

Formerly of *John's Jottings*  
in PCW Plus

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# PCW Contacts

**FOR SALE** Cambase 1 and 11, both inc manuals - £8 each. Masterscan/Master Paint complete - £15. Star LX-10 mono printer, inc manual - £25. Panasonic KX-P2135 colour printer inc. manual and set-up discs - £50 Contact 01642 898091 Yarm

**SHEET FEEDER** for PCW 9512 daisywheel printer. Hardly used. £15 plus postage. 01665 570662

**MANUALS (2)** for PCW 8256 - £9. Manual for PCW 8512 - £6. Manual for PCW 9512+, new and unused, with 3.5" CP/M and LocoScript discs - £11. Also printer ribbons for PCW 8512, £2 each. tel. John 0113 2671393

**WANTED** MicroDesign's Micro Display v3.0 or later for use with MicroDesign3 .MDA pictures. Lawrence Hellsby, 01959 573072

**END OF LINE** Clearance Sale. Amstrad PCW 8256/8512 keyboards. New and boxed with 90 days guarantee. £20 each including registered postage. Send cheques to S. Salmon, 9 London Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 9HN. Tel: 01268-785184. Cheaper price than most keyboard repairs / ideal backup purchase.

**URGENTLY WANTED** PCW 10. Contact Robert J Beadon, 4 Jackmans Place, Letchworth, Herts SG6 1RQ

**PCW UTILITIES** and games. All boxed with manuals (3" discs). £8 each. Plan It, Flexilabel, Data Store, Thurston Temp Disc 8.2, LocoSpell 2, LocoFont 2, Card Box, Data Flow, Simple Accounts, Hitch Hikers Guide, Starglider. Lawrence Hellsby 0159 573072

**UNWANTED** MicroDesign 3. As new, used once, complete with tutorial disc (3"), manual & original packing. £30 ono, or will swap for art/font discs for Stop Press. (I have original system and supplied clip art discs). Terry Donovan, 39 Woodley Hill, Chesham, Buckinghamshire. HP5 1SL. Tel: 01494 794512.

**PCW 16** new - Jan 1997. Perfect Order. Complete with manual, rescue disc etc. But not printer. £100. Buyer collects from Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. Tel: 01923 775924

**CALL FOR** help with LocoScript, CP/M or MicroDesign 2, or just for a chat about PCWs in general. Mon - Sat, 2-8pm. Or write to: Kathleen Thorpe, 22 Haddon Way, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 3EE. Tel: 0115 9720114.

**QUICKMYTH** Locofile databases come in five versions. Greek £5, Greek/Norse £7.50, Greek/Norse/Celtic £10, Egyptology £9.50, Deepmyth £10 (deep screen Greek myth). If Egyptology or myths of the Greeks and Vikings interest you then SAE (larger the better) for details to Derrick Gaskin, 119 London Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4NP

**LOCOSCRIPT 3** - complete with printer support discs and manuals - £15. LocoScript 4 - all software and manuals - £10. Clip Art 1 - five discs and original - £10. MicroDesign. Contact: EG Platt, 0118 9721435

**WANTED** good home for Amstrad 8512 PCW (monitor, improved keyboard, printer) in mint condition! LocoScript and Protext software, manuals, fifteen 3" discs. Also, nearly new Brother 1818 dot matrix printer plus sheet feeder. Shame to chuck the lot in the skip! First reasonable offer accepted. 0171 6039681 or 0181 9956140.

**WANTED** Flipper 3 with manual. Also Rampart. Will consider software/hardware exchange. E Ruddick: 01642 898091.

**PCW9512** items for sale Printer, fully working - £25. Three inch discs, unused apart from original formatting - £1.20 each. Ribbons for 9512, boxed and sealed - £2 each. Working A: drive 3" - £20. Tractor paper feed for 9512 - £8. Tel John 0113 2671393.

**WANTED** for PCW 8512, text adventures and other games, plus contacts using PCWs for text adventures. Tel. John 0113 2671393

**NEW!** I can buy discs to order - 3.5", 5.25", 8". All densities. Sorry no 3". For more details/prices, call Robert Nisbet on 01865 351448

**ANY PCW** users in this area want to make contact? I am new to LocoScript 4 and colour printing and could use an exchange of ideas. My other hobby is biking and I ride a 750 Intruder. Terry Donovan, 39 Woodley Hill, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 1SL. Tel: 01494 794512

**KEYMOUSE** and interface - £25. MicroDesign 3 (3.5") with manuals - £20. LocoScript 3 Upgrade Disc and manual - £10. Comix Simple Accounts 2 - £10. MicroMaths GCSE program - £5. SCA MiniRam 512k - £25. Learn LocoScript 2 cassette tapes - £5. Illustrated LocoScript by Susan Rogers - £5. The Amstrad PCW Series by John Atherton - £5. Tel: 01753 546166

**WANTED:** Issues from 1 to 5 of PCW Today Will pay £4 each inc. delivery. Contact Robert J Beadon, 4 Jackman's Place, Letchworth, Herts SG6 1RQ

**HAVING** owned a PCW for 10 years and spent many hours programming in BASIC, LOGO, Z80 Assembler and PASCAL, I will try to answer any programming queries accompanied by an SAE. Minor problems may be solveable over the phone. Fred Manders, 4 Carral Close, Lincoln LN5 9BD. Tel: 01522 721512

**WANT** A special program for your PCW? If you can supply me with the specification I will attempt to write it, so long as you agree the copyright belongs to me. Modest fee if I come up with the goods. Fred Manders, 01522 721512

To advertise in PCW Contacts is absolutely free. Whatever you want to advertise, put it here. Currently we accept general advertising, but priority is always given to PCW related items. You can have up to three separate adverts, of up to 50 words each. For commercial adverts, the cost of a single 50 words, or less, insertion is £3. We reserve the right to edit your adverts and can refuse them without giving a reason. We cannot accept liability for any mistakes or errors.

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# THE DISC DRIVE



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# An opportunity missed?

*Steve Denson opens his diary for the first time*

**T**HE YEAR 1997 ended with a very busy run-up to the Christmas sales season. As well as the usual orders for PCW games discs and books we also had a flurry of hardware sales especially of 3.5" drives and inkjet printers.

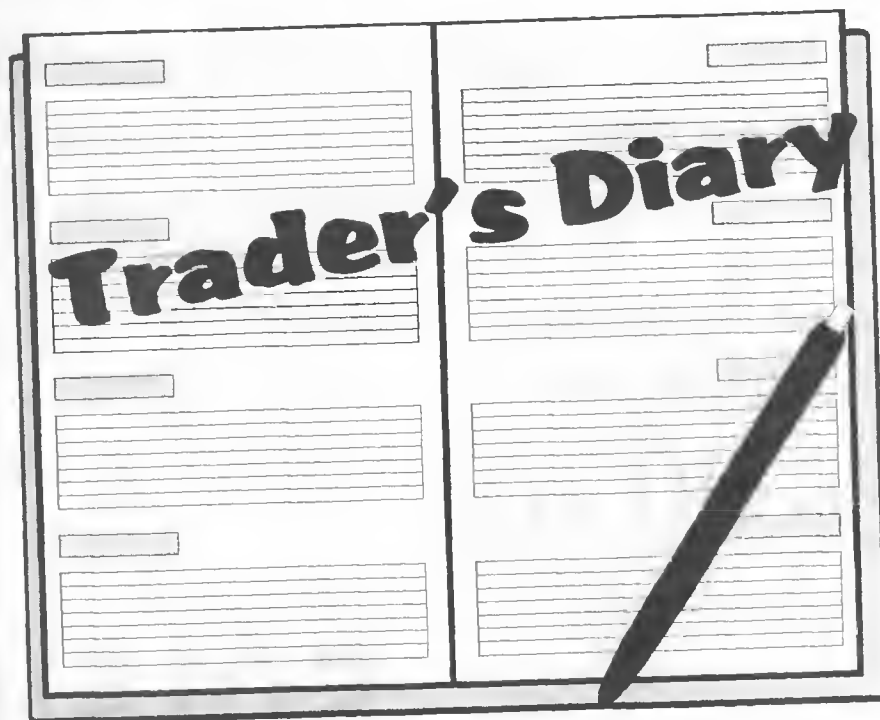
This is an encouraging sign as people do not spend good money on their PCWs if they are planning to abandon them in favour of the latest PC megamachines.

How wonderful it would have been for us to be able to offer a brand new, all-singing, all-dancing Amstrad PcW on the verge of the millennium.

I noted with sadness, therefore, that by the New Year the PcW 16 had been marked down to £ 129.95 by the Dixons/Currys group in newspaper adverts.

Remember that this new Amstrad model had started off priced at £299 only a year ago and so this is a pretty dramatic decline in value. If one considers that the PcW 16 could now be purchased with an inkjet printer for around the £250 mark this looks at first glance like a fantastic bargain. But think deeper. Apart from using the built-in software including a WP which cannot hold a candle to Locoscript 4, plus a scattering of third party programs what else can one do with the machine?

As an Amstrad dealer (and enthusiast) of long-standing I would love to have been able to support and even sell the 16 but I find myself saying "if only...". A machine which could run all your favourite CP/M programs and Locoscript at a much more rapid rate, and which offered a built-in graphical front end on power-up would have proved an absolute winner both with existing PCW users requiring an upgrade AS WELL AS first-timers



seeking a low-cost starter system as an alternative to the overblown Pentiums. There remains a definite gap in the market for such a computer which, to become established, has to be available in the high street.

The PcW 16 was, in my opinion, a golden opportunity that was missed and illustrates how a company once so clever can become so dumb that they miss their target market by a million miles. Strong words I know, but surely nobody could describe the '16 as a success story.

Yet it did not fail because the PCW concept had passed its sell-by date. A truly updated compatible PCW could have done very well and found a niche in the late 90s. After all, 8-bit was already old-hat when the 8256 was launched in 1985. Nobody cared then because the machine did the job it was designed for and the same would apply today.

No, I believe that the designers were

not provided with a concise-enough blueprint and were sidetracked by people who were involved in the development team and actually did not want a new PCW at all but rather a new, super 8-bit machine.

No names, no pack drill but they know who they are and I hope they are satisfied with the part they played in a project which fell flat. There is surely no denying that it would have been far easier to design and manufacture a machine capable of running CP/M and LocoScript (even if the latter was not bundled free), of reading DOS files and yet with a faster, friendlier GUI front-end?

After all, this is already available separately on the old PCWs but how much better if these features were built into a brand-new computer. Many users, especially first timers, want the security that comes with the sort of warranty, only offered with new machines.

We can but dream on.

# P.D. Blake

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**PD Blake, 99 Normandy Avenue, Beverley, E.Yorks HU17 8PR.**

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**Protex** in its CP/M version is the fastest and most complete word processor on the Amstrad PCW. On one disc, the program features include:

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Protex v2.23 has had 12 years of continuous development. Despite being highly developed, above all, it is very fast and the user friendly 'look and feel' of the program has been maintained throughout its development. Because of Protex's wide range of useful features, it is impossible to cover everything here, but further information is available if you send an A4 SAE to Brian Watson at Protex Software, Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA. Alternatively, you can phone 01353 777006 (from 7-9pm weekdays, or any time at weekends)

CP/M Protex, the one-disc word processing solution, costs just £25. It is available from the above address or from ComSoft, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW. Orders may be placed by phone on 0141 5544735, quoting your credit card details. Please state the computer model and your drive A: size when ordering.

# Looking Backwards

*Former PCW Plus favourite, David Langford, reminisces about the good-old days*

**T**here's one big question that gets asked wherever two or three PCW owners are gathered together: 'Where were you when you heard that PCW Plus had been axed?'

The answer for me is, well, the same place where I learn most news: sitting at a keyboard watching e-mail and Usenet messages come chugging down the line. The date was 2 November 1996, the place was the comp.sys.amstrad.8bit newsgroup, and I still remember reading with slack-jawed horror how Future Publishing had deployed fear, surprise and ruthless efficiency by rushing the bad news to the PCW Plus editorial staff just a week before the final issue 124 went to press.

At that time I felt a bit like the oldest inhabitant, wearing a long white beard and mumbling: 'Ar, what do these new users with their pansy 3.5" drives know? In my day we had to mortgage our wives just for the down payment on a pack of CF2s, and still hunt all over the floor for the missing address marks. And when you told LocoScript 0.5 to move to the end of a 4k document, you had time to make a pot of tea, drive to the airport, go on holiday to Majorca, and come home before it finished scrolling. Tell that to today's youngsters and they won't believe you. Harrumph!'

Well, something quite a lot like that anyway. There were certainly deep, poignant emotions associated with having had columns in the very first 8000 Plus dated October 1986, and (despite gaps when Future decided they couldn't afford luxuries like columnists) the very last PCW Plus in December 1996. Perhaps it's best summed up in the simple, tragic words that later came spontaneously to my lips: 'They're never going to send me a complimentary copy of no. 124 now, the rotten sods.'

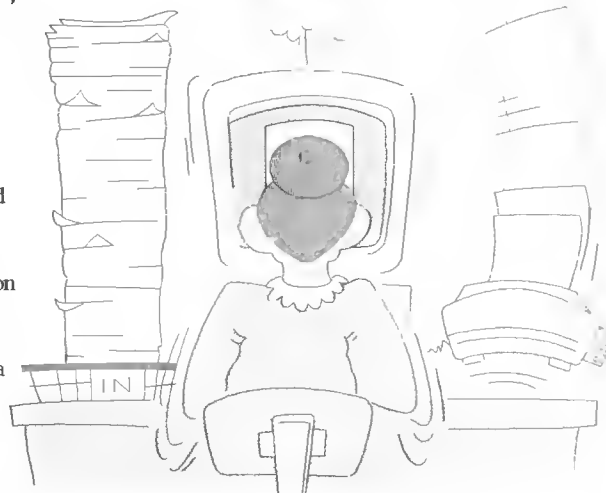
Really, it was a strange time for the magazine to fold, since LocoScript Software ('Ar, today's youngsters don't know the thrill of the glory days when they were Locomotive.') had just caused a splash of excitement in the PCW world by releasing LocoScript Version 4. That should have

been worth a few more issues of hot debate on exciting new word processing techniques, and indeed new bugs. Experienced LocoScript-watchers got the impression of wall-to-wall panic in Dorking until the original Loco 4 could be replaced a little later with the very much more wonderful Loco 4 Release 2.

Meanwhile, with PCW Plus gone I couldn't whinge in public about the problems caused to my own Ansible Information by the unexpected -- by me, anyway -- appearance of Loco 4. The trouble was that our internationally unknown AnsibleIndex software reads Loco files, but was unable to recognize or understand Loco 4 documents thanks to slight but significant changes of structure. So Ansible customers who upgraded to Loco 4 were soon sending ominous letters and making doom-laden phone calls to say how we could shortly expect a visit from the Men With Big Sticks....

It was a tense time. Fearlessly I shouldered the responsibility by answering these anguished complaints and queries in suitably shifty, unconvincing tones: 'Er um, it's all LocoScript's fault!' Far away in Hastings, my business partner Chris Priest backed me up nobly by answering enquiries with: 'Don't blame me, guv, blame Langford.'

In the meantime, the old PCW was glowing red-hot as Borland Turbo Pascal 3.0 - my favourite CP/M programming language - stalked the M: drive once again, after years of slumber. Good old Howard Fisher of LocoScript had sent along a buckshee copy of Loco 4, so I could work out some of the obvious changes by analysing the documents which this produced. Unfortunately, one of the not-so-obvious changes was subtle enough to be very, very hard to identify by peering suspiciously into document files with CP/M's SID.COM and my own home-made software toolkit.



Finally, at the eleventh hour, just as the entire Ansible Customer Support group had surrounded my house wearing pointy white hoods with sinister eyeholes, and were igniting a huge blazing replica of a 3" disk on the front lawn ... the heroic programming team at Loco completed their magic software developer's bible, *The Structure of LocoScript 4 Documents*. Howard instantly had a copy rushed by helicopter to Reading and parachute-dropped to me, and thus the world was saved. That's what it was like in the grand old days of February 1997. Tell that to today's youngsters and they won't believe you.

What a great man Howard Fisher is. What a pity I never had the chance to write up this episode in the hallowed pages of PCW Plus.

According to my own files for that magazine's fateful ten years, I did somehow manage to publish 88 columns there. Only one passage was censored by steely-eyed editors: a mini-rant about the bloody awful index in the manual for the Amstrad PPC portable, vetoed because the PPC wasn't a PCW. Early on, under a different editor, I'd got away with an entire column on the PPC. So it goes.

Which brings me to this issue's amazing free offer. Since these days I have some spare web space, I've whimsically made all my old PCW Plus columns - including that censored chunk of text - available for perusal at ... <http://www.ansible.demon.co.uk/ai/pcwplus/>

Have fun!

# -Company Locator-

**Aladdink** 43 High Street, Eyemouth, Berwickshire TD14 5EY. Tel: 01890 750965.

Fabric and film ribbon recycling and re-inking. They also supply DIY re-inking packs.

**Amstrad** Brentwood House, 169 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EF. Tel: 0181 3446200. PcW 16 Hotline Support: 0891 515715.

Manufacturers of the PcW 16 and every other PCW on the planet.

**Ansible Information** 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU. Tel/Fax: 01424 7204757 E-mail: [ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk).

If you write a book with LocoScript, you'll need an index. That's where AnsibleIndex comes in.

**Comsoft** 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW. Tel: 0141 5544735.

The home of Protext. They also sell the brilliant RoutePlanner and Inventory Master for the PcW 16.

**Christian Computer Art** 33 Bramley Way, Hardwick, Cambridge CB3 7XD. Tel: 01954 210009.

If you produce a church magazine, this company supplies a huge range of religious clip art for MicroDesign, sadly on 3.5" only.

**Cirtech** Monksford Stables, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0RU. Tel: 01835 823898 Fax: 01835 822471.

They are the PCW hardware kings. Cirtech sell the Flash Drive, GEM II Hard Drives, Sprinter, and SpeedPrint.

**Creative Technology** 10 Park Street, Uttroter, Staffs ST14 7AG. Tel: 01889 567160 Fax: 01889 563548

MicroDesign3 is by far the best DTP for the PCW. Also available are a mouse and a hand scanner. Creative also sell all the PcW 16 software

**Dave The Disc Doctor** Tel: 01892 835974 E-mail: [daves@diskdoctor.co.uk](mailto:daves@diskdoctor.co.uk).

If you want a disc fixing, Dave Smith is your man. He can repair damaged discs and all of his fee goes to charity.

**David Landers** Brinkburn Gardens Cottage, Longframlington, Morpeth NE65 8AR. Tel: 01665 570662.

If you use LocoScript and LocoMail, Instant Recall 1 and 2 add a huge range of new features to the family.

**Derrick Gaskin** 119 London Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4NP.

The house of Quikmyth - a unique range of mythology discs for use with LocoFile.

**Garrison Computers** 191 Watling Street Road, Fulwood, Preston PR2 4AE. Tel: 01772 701248 Fax 01772 703131.

Formerly known as MicroForm, this company have been selling PCW disc drives and spares for years.

**LocoScript Software** 10 Vincent Works, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3HJ. Tel: 01306 747757 Fax: 01306 885529 Internet: [www.locomotive.com](http://www.locomotive.com).

This company is by far the biggest supplier of PCW goods. They supply the full range including, of course, LocoScript 4. Ask for a catalogue.

**Mapej** Meadow View, Quinta Crescent, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7RN. Tel: 01691 778659 Fax: 01691 777638.

They'll transfer data between PCWs and just about any other computer you'd care to think of.

**Midas Charity Ink** "Kynance", 5 Nelson Road, Brixham, South Devon TQ5 8BH. Tel: Fax: 01803 853144.

A printer ribbon re-inking service where the profits go to charity.

**Office Land** 10 Sterte Close, Poole, Dorset BH15 2AT. Tel: 01202 666155 Fax: 01202 677958.

Specialists in printer consumables, also some software and accessories.

**Pinboard Computers** Unit 9, Bondor Business Centre, London Road, Baldock, Herts SG7 6HP. Tel: 01462 894460 Fax: 01462 894460

The best-known supplier of disc Drives, Pinboard also sell complete PCW systems.

**PD Blake** 99 Normandy Avenue, Beverley, E. Yorks HU17 8PR. Tel: 01482 864230 (7-9pm).

Now the leading supplier of PCW public domain software. Ask for a catalogue. Some commercial software also on sale.

**Philosoft** 57 Llwyn-Onn, Penderyn, Aberdare, Wales CF44 9XY. Tel: 01685 813978.

Writers of Insight - Optical Character Recognition software that enables the PCW to read scanned-in text.

**RP Hill** 84 Wincheap, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3RS.

Basic 98 - a major new programming add-on for the PCW.

**Protext Software** Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA. Tel: 01353 777006 Fax: 01353 777766.

The second base of Protext and the home of Brian Watson's 8 Bit magazine.

**SD MicroSystems** PO Box 99, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1NA. Tel/Fax: 07000 736427.

A massive range of original software available. Also some hardware and the famous 3" drive reviver kit.

**Solent PCW Services** 20 masefield Crescent, Waterlooville, Hants PO8 8JS. Tel/Fax: 01705 268780.

A company specialising in PCW repairs, spares, upgrades and complete systems. Also a massive range of second hand software available

**Three Inch Software** 14 Cartaret Close, Willen, Milton Keynes MK15 9LD. Tel: 01908 690704.

They sell the only thesaurus you can buy for LocoScript. Also the 9512 Rescue Kit and PCW Link.





# SD MICROSYSTEMS



**(Dept PCW), PO BOX 99, THETFORD,  
Norfolk IP24 1NA Tel/Fax: (07000) 736427.**

## PCW Software

*Available on 3" or 3.5" disc for all PCWs or PcWs (except 16), complete with manuals.*

**NEW! ROUTE PLANNER.....£24.95**

*Selects the best road routes between two towns from a superb graphical UK map.*

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*Label maker for Epson compatible printers.*

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**@ £5.00 per disc or any four for £15.00.**

**PRINTMASTER 1 and PRINTMASTER 2 -**  
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**BRITMAP, MS-DISC (PCW<>PC Transfers)**

**PCW TOOLKIT, CP/M UTILITIES (various)**

**PD GAMES DISC 1 (Fun/Arcade collection)**

**PD GAMES DISC 2 (Adventure/Strategy)**

**MICRO DESIGN/STOP PRESS CLIP ART:**

**1 Business 2 Sport 3 Nature 4 Fun 5 Variety**

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**PCW Printer Ribbons (all models).....£3.95**

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*Blitz, Defender, Patience, Cricket, Squash etc*

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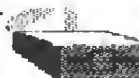
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